



The University will do their best to support you through any personal difficulties but it is your responsibility to complete and submit an Extenuating Circumstances Form as soon as you possibly can. There is never an excuse for academic misconduct. You can get advice on completion from the Students' Union Student Advice Centre: [www.staffsunion.com/advice/advicecentre](http://www.staffsunion.com/advice/advicecentre)

Any student suspected of academic misconduct will be dealt with in accordance with the 'Procedure Dealing with Breaches of Assessment Regulations: Academic Misconduct' [www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/academic\\_misconduct\\_tcm44-26770.pdf](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/academic_misconduct_tcm44-26770.pdf)

The penalties for a proven case of academic misconduct vary from failure of a piece of assessment to failure of your award or expulsion. This is why it is vital that you are aware of the need to fully acknowledge all sources used and protect the integrity of your work.

If you do find yourself accused of academic misconduct do contact the Student Advice Centre (see above) for independent advice and support.

### So how can you avoid academic misconduct and improve your assessment grades?

Staffordshire University is committed to ensuring that you are aware of, and adhere to, the standards of academic referencing required for higher education in the UK. Penalties for academic misconduct will always be applied to those found to have committed offences, because we believe that the University offers you all the necessary support and guidance you need to make sure that academic misconduct can be avoided.

Staffordshire University has Study Skills Centres at both the Stoke (Thompson Library) and Stafford (Nelson Library) sites. You can meet a Study Skills Advisor who will guide you on the referencing style used on your course. There is also a web page called Refworks for you to access for online support [www.staffs.ac.uk/info/services/library/find/references/refworks](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/info/services/library/find/references/refworks)

Refzone [www.staffs.ac.uk/refzone](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/refzone) is a referencing support site linked to the University Library main pages. It provides a basic guide to referencing including how and when to reference to make sure that you avoid allegations of plagiarism. Refzone can also provide you with helpful examples of referencing styles and a clear explanation of the often confusing terminology around academic misconduct issues. You can also improve your skills and test your knowledge of referencing by taking the two online quizzes.

All new students to Staffordshire University will have tutorial study skill support to explain the referencing style associated with their course and are given examples to make sure they can use it. Students are also given the opportunity to submit a piece of work through the Turnitin software [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com), so that they can see how this works.

We are committed to providing you with the knowledge and skills you need to avoid committing academic misconduct, accidentally or otherwise. Staffordshire University takes all cases of academic misconduct very seriously and it is extremely important that you do not jeopardise your academic career. So take advantage of the help and support available to you by accessing study skills and tutorial support and to make sure that your work remains free from academic misconduct.

# MAKE HONESTY YOUR POLICY

HOW TO AVOID ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

# INTRODUCTION

**This is Staffordshire University's pocket guide to avoiding academic misconduct. Reading it will give you the knowledge and skills to avoid being accused of plagiarism, or other forms of academic misconduct. It may also help you improve your assessment grades.**

This guide will set out exactly what we mean by academic misconduct. You may find this surprising: it might be different from the academic cultures you are used to. It also explains how we can detect academic misconduct and what penalties apply when it is proved. This is important because the maximum penalty for academic misconduct is failure of your award.

Most importantly, this guide will explain how the University can offer you support and guidance on referencing your work properly and avoiding the potential pitfalls which can lead you to commit academic misconduct, even by accident. In short, this guide will help you to succeed!

## What is academic misconduct?

Staffordshire University provides a comprehensive, but not complete list of definitions of academic misconduct in the Academic Award Regulations: "Procedure for Dealing with Assessment Regulations: Academic Misconduct". However, this guide describes the most common types of academic misconduct and those that students most often find themselves investigated for. These are plagiarism, collusion, commissioning work and misconduct in examinations.

### 1. Plagiarism

There are lots of ways in which academic work can be considered to be plagiarised. Plagiarism is using somebody else's words or ideas as your own. You may be surprised by what is considered to be plagiarism in higher education in the UK:

#### **Not referencing your work properly**

You must fully reference your work using the reference system used by your course (eg Harvard Reference System). Students often feel that if they list their references at the end of their assignment, this is sufficient. IT IS NOT.

You must use quotation marks and references within your text to fully acknowledge your sources. Anything short of this is considered to be plagiarism whether intentional or not.

#### **Substantial Paraphrasing**

Some students are tempted to take text from a source and add only a few words or re-arrange the order of the sentences. They may then add the reference at the end of their work, or not. This is known as substantial paraphrasing and is considered in many cases to be plagiarism.

Imagine someone reading your essay: if that person could not easily work out straight away which words were yours and which words were someone else's, it's probably plagiarism

### 2. Collusion

This is where two or more students work together to produce work which is submitted as an individual's own work. You may be surprised to learn that any student who shows his or her work to another student, for whatever reason, is also guilty of collusion and may be treated as such by the University. Please remember, do not share your work with anyone or leave your work in hard copy, on disc or on your computer screen for others to see.

### 3. Buying assignments

Staffordshire University, and Higher Education institutions in general, are aware of the websites or individuals which sell assignments. These sites are checked and monitored. Students who access them to buy, sell work or share, are guilty of commissioning. This offence carries a very serious penalty.

### 4. Examination misconduct

Formal examinations or class tests operate under strict examination conditions. Examination misconduct can be defined as attempting to enter an examination with aids, (defined as ANY materials that you are not told that you should bring with you) attempting to communicate with a fellow candidate during an examination or trying to get an unfair advantage in some other way. Some students may find that their previous academic cultures or levels of study have been more relaxed. It is therefore essential that you are aware of, and adhere to, the rules of examination conduct.

## How does Staffordshire University detect and deal with academic misconduct?

Detecting academic misconduct is part of the role of academic staff at Staffordshire University. Staff members are very knowledgeable about research in their own area. They are also familiar with the websites which students are advised against using for research, such as Wikipedia. Staff are able to detect where these sources have been used, even without reference. They will also be very familiar with your writing style and will easily see any changes which may indicate plagiarism.

The University also uses plagiarism detection software called Turnitin. At least one of your assignments will be submitted for analysis through this software. The programme checks your work against a database of published and online sources, along with any works already run through the Turnitin software. Plagiarism and collusion will be detected.

Many students who have been found to commit academic misconduct have done so unintentionally. For example, they have rushed their assignment and failed to fully reference their work, or they are unaware of the rules around academic referencing. Nevertheless, ignorance of the rules is no defence and if you commit academic misconduct offences, even unintentionally, you will be charged.

You may feel tempted to rush your assignment or piece of work if you are experiencing personal difficulties. This is never an excuse for plagiarising work.

If you are not able to complete a piece of work to the best of your ability, or need extra time due to genuine extenuating circumstances, (up to 10 working days) you need to use the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure. There are some circumstances in which (if your extenuating circumstances are upheld) you will be allowed to submit at the NEXT assessment deadline without penalty.