Academic Misconduct: A Student Guide

As a student, you are expected to follow appropriate academic practice while you are at UCS.

- Your conduct is expected to be honest and fair.
- Your presentation of assessment is expected to be in accordance with appropriate academic conventions and standards.
- Your behaviour in exams and other assessed activities should be in accord with UCS regulations.

Academic Misconduct refers to actions involving assessment that fall outside these expectations. Examples of Academic Misconduct include:
- Submitting others’ work as your own in assessment (Plagiarism or Collusion).
- Making up results of research or experiments (Fabrication).
- Cheating in exams.

This document explores what is expected of you when you engage with assessment at UCS, and outlines how UCS deals with accusations of Academic Misconduct. The issues around Plagiarism and Collusion are outlined here: another document titled “Plagiarism and Collusion: A Student Guide” explores the area in detail. This is available on the Student Information Directory on the Intranet.

What is expected of you?

There are a variety of actions that UCS regards as inappropriate for a student while preparing and presenting assessed material. Here we present a summary of what we expect of you when you engage with assessment processes. In each case, we describe what is expected and give examples of actions that you should avoid.

You should do your assessment work yourself.

We are assessing your own abilities when we are assessing you. Should you get someone else to help you do your work, or even get another to do it for you, then we cannot assess you fairly. This is true whether you are assisted by
- fellow students (collusion)
- family, friends or work colleagues
- others you pay to do your work
- those you contact through the internet or other communication channels.

Everything you submit for assessment should be all your own work

You will be expected to make use of others’ words and ideas to guide and inspire your work. However, you should ensure that whenever this happens, you indicate this is the case to those assessing your work. When you present work that is not your own without making it clear, you are committing plagiarism.
It is important that you take care in the preparation and presentation of your work to ensure that you do not commit plagiarism by accident. Further guidance on how you can do this can be found in “Plagiarism and Collusion: A Student Guide”

**You should present results with honesty**

If research work does not go as you plan, you may find that you have no results to present. Alternatively, you may find that results that you have generated do not show what they ought, or what you wanted them to. In both situations, it can be tempting to manipulate the results or to ‘make something up’. If you do, you will be guilty of ‘fabrication of evidence’.

Your tutors know how difficult it can be to collate research results. They are aware that circumstances outside your control can prevent results being available. In general, your tutors are usually more interested in how you go about your research work and how you deal with the results you get rather than what the results are. Consequently, having the ‘wrong’ results, or no results at all, may not be as bad news as you fear.

Actions to consider when your research fails to produce results you are comfortable with include:

- When things go wrong and you cannot get valid results, you should approach your tutors for advice on what to do. They may allow you more time, or they may provide you with a set of results to analyse instead.

- If your results fail to show what you expect, the tutors will be interested in how you explain this. Include discussion in your submission exploring
  - what you expected,
  - what you believe the results do show,
  - reasons for the discrepancy.

In general, you should always plan research activities to ensure that you allow enough time for each stage.

The fabrication of evidence for assessment is considered one of the most severe types of Academic Misconduct. Such practice can lead to significant penalties including the termination of your studies.

**You should maintain records of attendance, practice and activities honestly**

Many courses at UCS require students to track their activities within work placements, or during research activities. For example, you may be required to record your attendance, get your competencies witnessed, or to maintain timesheets recording your activities. Where you are required to keep records that will be used as evidence within assessment processes, you should keep all records accurately and honestly.

If you act dishonestly, falsifying or making up records, you will be committing Academic Misconduct. This includes situations where you:

- falsify witness signatures;
submit records of activity which do not reflect your actual activities accurately.

Offences of this type are further instances of fabrication of evidence for assessment, and are considered to be some the most severe types of Academic Misconduct.

You should conduct yourself in examinations correctly
Examinations are used to ensure that students are able to work on their own and within time constraints. It is important that UCS makes examinations fair and ensures that all participants behave appropriately. In particular,

- You should not communicate with other students in any way during the period of the exam.
- Ensure you do not take into an exam any material that is prohibited. Some exams allow you to take in specific items. Open book exams usually allow you to take in anything you feel might be useful. If in doubt, consult with your tutors before the examination date.
- Turn off your mobile phones and leave them in a bag at the front of the examination room. If an invigilator was to find you have your phone with you, they will assume you are intending to use it to cheat!
- Follow the guidance of the invigilators. For example, you may only enter and leave the examination room with their permission.
- Leave all examination material in the examination room. You are also not permitted to make copies of examination questions and take these from the room when you leave.

The UCS policy ‘Preparation and Conduct of exams’ sets out how examinations are set and delivered. UCS also publishes a paper providing student guidance notes on written examinations each year. Both these documents are available in the Student Information Directory on the Intranet.

You should treat other students fairly
UCS aims to treat all students fairly and equally. We also expect our students to behave in a similar way towards each other. For example, we would regard any of the following as Academic Misconduct:

- Preventing another student gaining fair access to resources they require for their studies.
- Organising group work so that the workload is disproportionately allocated (possibly to your advantage or to another’s disadvantage) or so that fellow students are unable to demonstrate their abilities fairly.
- Making false allegations about the actions or inaction of another student.

You should not try to gain an unfair advantage
Sometimes students identify methods by which they may be able to gain an advantage in respect to their assessment. For example, they may

- try and access examination questions in advance;
o try to influence those assessing their work in order to gain a higher grade than is merited;
o attempt to manipulate the allocation of students into groups for group work;
o get another person to pretend to be them within an assessment activity.

Whether or not they are successful in their efforts, a student would be guilty of Academic Misconduct if they attempt any of these actions.

**How does UCS deal with Academic Misconduct?**

When a member of UCS staff identifies a suspected case of Academic Misconduct, they initiate a formal investigation process. This process, involving staff outside your course team, will determine the validity of the tutor’s suspicions. The result of the investigation is given to the Assessment Board where a decision is made on what actions and penalties should be applied. The investigative process is as follows:

1. Once a piece of work or incident has been identified as suspicious by a tutor, the matter is referred to the UCS Academic Registrar.

2. In accordance with the UCS Academic Misconduct Policy, the Academic Registrar will make an initial judgement of whether there is a case to answer. If not, the tutor will be asked to mark the work as usual. If the Academic Registrar agrees that there is a case to be investigated, s/he will write to the student. The letter to the student will specify the nature of the allegation and request a response. The student will be expected to provide a written statement explaining how they believe the allegation might have arisen. They may also provide relevant evidence. The student should respond within ten working days.

3. If the student
   - fails to respond to the letter, or
   - responds to the letter accepting the allegation,
the Academic Registrar will inform the student’s Assessment Board that they should treat the case as confirmed Academic Misconduct.

4. If the student responds to the letter denying the accusation then the Academic Registrar will nominate an Academic Misconduct Officer to investigate the accusation. The student will be invited to attend investigative meetings. These will be attended by the Academic Misconduct Officer together with a member of Academic Services staff who will take notes. The student may take along a person of their choice to support them.

5. The Academic Misconduct Officer will inform the student’s Assessment Board of the result of their investigation.

6. When an Assessment Board is told that a student’s work is not to be treated as a case of Academic Misconduct, they will award it the grade it would normally be given using the usual assessment process. Where Academic Misconduct has been deemed to have taken place, the
Assessment Board will apply any penalties appropriate to the severity of the case (see below).

Further details of this process can be found in the UCS Academic Misconduct Policy which is available in the Student Information Directory.

If you are unhappy with an Academic Misconduct investigation, you have the right to appeal. Use the UCS Academic Appeals Process to register your concerns and seek resolution. Details of the UCS Academic Appeals Process can be found on the Student Information Directory on the Intranet.