

Academic Integrity Policy

Section 1 - Summary

- (1) The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that:
- Victoria University (VU) takes a consistent approach to academic integrity;
 - Students and staff are aware of the importance of presenting authentic work that is their own, and acknowledging the work of others; and
 - A basis for detecting and addressing breaches of academic integrity in a range of teaching and assessment environments, including online, is provided.
- (2) This Policy is supported by:
- [Academic Integrity Guidelines](#);
 - [Student Misconduct Regulations 2019](#);
 - [Student Misconduct Procedure](#);
 - Training and support initiatives for staff and students.

Section 2 - TEQSA/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

- (3) This Policy demonstrates VU's compliance with the following HESF Standards:
- Standard 5.2.1: There are policies that promote and uphold the academic and research integrity of courses and units of study, research and research training activities, and institutional policies and procedures address misconduct and allegations of misconduct.
 - Standard 5.2.2: Preventative action is taken to mitigate foreseeable risks to academic and research integrity including misrepresentation, fabrication, cheating, plagiarism and misuse of intellectual property, and to prevent recurrences of breaches.
 - Standard 5.2.3: Students are provided with guidance on what constitutes academic or research misconduct and the development of good practices in maintaining academic and research integrity.
 - Standard 5.2.4: Academic and research integrity and accountability for academic and research integrity are maintained in arrangements with any other party involved in the provision of higher education, including placements, collaborative research, research training and joint award of qualifications.
 - Standard 6.2.1 (j): [The provider is able to demonstrate, and the corporate governing body assures itself, that the provider is operating effectively and sustainably, including] the occurrence and nature of formal complaints, allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic or research integrity and critical incidents are monitored and action is taken to address underlying causes.
 - Standard 7.2.2 (d): [Information for students is available prior to acceptance of an offer, written in plain English where practicable, accompanied by an explanation of any technical or specialised terms, and includes] information to give access to current academic governance policies and requirements including admission, recognition of prior learning, transition, progression, assessment, grading, completion, qualifications, appeals, academic integrity, equity and diversity, intellectual property and withdrawal from or cancellation of enrolment.

- g. Standard 7.3.3: Information systems and records are maintained, securely and confidentially as necessary to:
 - i. Prevent unauthorised or fraudulent access to private or sensitive information, including information where unauthorised access may compromise academic or research integrity.
 - ii. Document and record responses to formal complaints, allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic or research integrity and critical incidents

(4) [Standards for Registered Training Organisations \(RTOs\) 2015 \(Cth\)](#)

Section 3 - Scope

(5) This Policy applies to all students and staff with respect to:

- a. Work submitted for assessment or completed as part of assessment activities;
- b. Works submitted for publication;
- c. Works involving the use of the research data materials or research findings of others.

(6) This Policy does not apply to research integrity. Research integrity is covered at VU under the [Research Integrity Policy](#).

Section 4 - Definitions

(7) Academic Integrity

(8) Collusion

(9) Contract Cheating: This occurs when a student requests or pays someone else to produce all or part of an assessment task that is submitted as their own work, including arrangements through a third party. It may include the use of contract cheating service providers or websites.

(10) File Sharing

(11) Plagiarism

(12) Poor scholarship (citation): The inadequate, incomplete or misleading citation of references and sources, including the student's own past work if relied upon.

(13) Research

(14) Washing

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(15) Academic integrity and honesty are integral to maintaining the academic standards and reputation of VU and its graduates. VU is committed to upholding high standards of academic integrity in all teaching and assessment environments, including online.

Part A - What is Academic Integrity?

(16) Academic integrity is the ethical basis upon which academic work is produced. It comprises six important values that shape the work of VU in teaching, research and engagement. These are:

- a. Honesty, which involves acknowledging the work and ideas of others;
- b. Trust, which is a mutual relationship between teachers and students;
- c. Fairness, through the establishment and communication of clear and transparent and realistic assessment expectations and clear standards that are applied consistently;
- d. Respect for the participatory nature of learning and the work and perspective of others;
- e. Responsibility, which highlights that every person at the University has a duty to maintain academic integrity;
- f. Courage, which allows learners to commit to the quality of their education by holding themselves and their fellow learners to the highest standards of academic integrity even when doing so involves risk of negative consequences or reprisal.

(17) Breaches of academic integrity include:

- a. Plagiarism and failures of correct acknowledgement practice;
- b. Contract cheating or requesting or paying for another person to prepare an assessable piece of work;
- c. Submitting (for assessment or review) work prepared by another person;
- d. Collusion;
- e. All forms of cheating in examinations;
- f. Offering or accepting bribes to obtain or give an unearned academic advantage; and
- g. Fabrication or falsification of information.

Any of these practices undermine the integrity of assessment of students' work and thus place the credentialing authority of VU at risk and, in consequence, its reputation as well.

Part B - Poor Scholarship

(18) At times, assessed work can show evidence of incomplete, improper or inaccurate citation. This may occur:

- a. When a student makes a genuine attempt to reference their work, but has inadequate referencing skills; or
- b. Where a student displays a lack of awareness that the content used should be cited (eg. using verbatim content from course note materials, or their own notes of a lecturer's material that use phrases without acknowledgement); or
- c. When a student reuses their own original work that has previously been presented for assessment, at VU or elsewhere, without acknowledgment.

(19) Poor scholarship in terms of inadequate referencing is not an academic integrity matter and should be addressed in the context of the teaching, learning and assessment environment. It should be distinguished from plagiarism (see Part C below), in which substantive amounts of material from another written source are used without a genuine attempt to acknowledge the reference.

Part C - Breaches of Academic Integrity

Plagiarism

(20) Plagiarism is the use of another person's intellectual output, presented without appropriate acknowledgement, which creates the impression that the work is being claimed as one's own. The following are examples of plagiarism:

- a. Presenting another person's work or research data as your own work;
- b. Copying out parts of any work without acknowledging the source(s). This may be:
 - i. Written text (verbatim copying or paraphrasing);
 - ii. Structures within texts;

- iii. Diagrams;
 - iv. Formulae;
 - v. Sound files;
 - vi. Still photographs;
 - vii. Audio-visual material (sound and image files);
 - viii. Graphics/animations/multimedia objects;
 - ix. Software and code, including mashed-up products or code;
 - x. Other computer based material;
 - xi. Mathematical proofs;
 - xii. Art objects;
 - xiii. Practical artifacts (ie apprenticeship pieces);
 - xiv. Other work as relevant.
- c. The use of someone else's concepts, experimental results, experimental conclusions or conclusions drawn from analysing evidence or arguments without acknowledging the originator of the idea(s) or conclusion(s).

(21) A modern form of plagiarism is known as "washing". This occurs when Google Translate or similar services are used to translate a plagiarised assessment into another language and then back again into English. This process involves automatically substituted generated synonyms and phrases and creating an ostensibly "new" document.

(22) Use of one's own previous work in satisfaction of a new assessment requirement is not frank plagiarism but may also be impermissible, as it will not constitute new work completed in satisfaction of the requirement. It is the responsibility of teaching staff to ensure that students are given adequate information and tools to understand the originality requirement for assessment, and how it applies to their studies. However, students may choose to cite their own previous work, if relevant, in the appropriate way.

(23) Plagiarism may be academic misconduct. In some cases, an educative response may be appropriate (see Part E) where there is evidence that plagiarism has occurred due to an inadvertent failure to understand the rules of assessment and citation.

(24) "Washing" is designed to disguise plagiarism. As such, it is an intentional act and shows an awareness of the impropriety of the behaviour. If a student submits an assessment task that shows verifiable evidence of washing, this will automatically lead to the matter being treated as misconduct.

Contract Cheating

(25) Contract cheating occurs when a student requests someone else to produce all or part of an assessment task that is submitted as their own work, including arrangements through a third party. Contract cheating is usually, but not exclusively, a paid arrangement.

(26) The provision of contract cheating services (also known as academic cheating services) is now a criminal offence in Australia, following the passage of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment (Prohibiting Academic Cheating Services) Bill 2019. The law criminalises the actions of service providers rather than students who use the services.

(27) Third parties who are engaged to produce work may include:

- a. Essay writing services;
- b. Friends, family or other students;
- c. Private tutors;
- d. Copyediting services;

- e. Agency websites; or
- f. Providers located via 'reverse classifieds'.

(28) There are five main categories of third-party commercial providers:

- a. Academic custom writing;
- b. Online labour markets;
- c. Pre-written essay banks;
- d. File sharing sites; and
- e. Paid exam takers.

(29) Contract cheating is a serious breach of academic integrity and a form of fraud. It has implications for students' learning outcomes, the reputation of VU, educational standards and credibility, and public safety, particularly in fields where a student's own mastery of the material is essential to their ability to practice professionally.

(30) Contract cheating is academic misconduct in all instances and will be dealt with under the [Student Misconduct Regulations 2019](#) and [Student Misconduct Procedure](#). Penalties for proven contract cheating may include the full range of penalties available under that Regulation, including exclusion from the University.

(31) Where an allegation of contract cheating has been verified, and the student, as part of the misconduct process, discloses the identity and details of the contract cheating service or provider, The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Higher Education will provide information regarding the service or provider to TEQSA for action under the law, as part of TEQSA's enforcement and administration function within 30 days of the conclusion of the misconduct process.

File Sharing

(32) Academic file-sharing is the transfer and trading of lecture materials, notes, assessment tasks, answers, and responses with others, including Internet-based sites. It differs from contract cheating in that it does not necessarily involve payments and often involves reciprocal sharing of individuals' own completed assessment tasks.

(33) Academic file-sharing is not permitted unless:

- a. The student or graduate has sought or been granted explicit permission by the Course Chair to share the relevant material (this may be done at a whole-class level if appropriate); and
- b. The material being shared does not contain any content which is the intellectual property of a third person (e.g. lecture notes which capture verbatim the lecturer's speech, rather than the student's interpretation of it).

(34) Academic file-sharing is not exclusively done online, but is increasingly facilitated by crowdsourced websites. These websites can operate in a predatory fashion and take advantage of students' lack of understanding.

(35) Academic file-sharing may be academic misconduct. In some cases, an educative response may be appropriate (see Part E) where there is evidence that the student has not understood the University's restrictions around sharing work or using work shared by others, or has not been given an appropriate opportunity to rectify any unintended breach.

Collusion

(36) Collusion is unauthorised collaboration on assessable work (written, oral or practical) with others. This can occur when a student presents group work as their own or as the work of another person.

(37) Collusion may be with another VU student or with people or students external to the University. This applies to work assessed by VU or another university.

(38) Collusion occurs when a student, without the authorisation of the teaching staff:

- a. Works with one or more people to prepare and produce work;
- b. Allows others to copy their work or share an answer to an assessment task;
- c. Allow someone else to write or edit their work (except when such a use is expressly allowed e.g. the use of a scribe as part of a disability access accommodation);
- d. Writes or substantially edits work for another student without the knowledge of the assessor (proofreading is allowable and is not collusion);
- e. Offers to complete work for other students.

(39) Collusion may be academic misconduct. In some cases, an educative response may be appropriate (see Part E) where there is evidence that collusion has occurred due to an inadvertent failure to understand the rules of assessment (e.g. an early-year student using a family member to substantially edit or rewrite an essay draft).

Examination and Test Cheating

(40) Cheating in examinations or tests is a breach of academic integrity. Cheating occurs when a student uses any method to attempt to gain an unfair advantage in the exam or test environment, whether in-person or online, including:

- a. Copying the work of another examination candidate;
- b. Cutting and pasting pre-written answers during an online examination;
- c. Using unauthorised answers, reference material, notes, or devices containing these;
- d. Requesting or permitting another person to take your place (impersonate you) at a test or examination; or
- e. Any other breach of the Examination Rules as per the [Assessment for Learning - Examination Administration Procedure](#).

(41) In the context of open-book online or in-person examinations, unintended or uninformed plagiarism may occur or be perceived to occur, especially where questions call for specific content to be repeated (e.g. lists of information with correct names that may appear identically in textbooks or other resources). Perceived plagiarism in online or open-book examinations should be interrogated before being classified as examination cheating, and may be suitable for an educative response.

(42) Examination cheating is academic misconduct in all instances and will be dealt with under the [Student Misconduct Regulations 2019](#). Penalties for proven examination cheating may include the full range of penalties available under that Regulation, including exclusion from the University.

Bribery

(43) Bribing, or attempting to bribe, a person who has control over any aspect of a student's academic performance is both a breach of academic integrity, and also potentially a corruption matter which may be investigated under VU's anti-corruption framework.

(44) Bribery does not need to be with money. Any offer to exchange favours or benefits of any kind for unmerited academic advantage is a breach of academic integrity.

(45) Bribery includes inducements offered for:

- a. Obtaining an offer of admission or an offer of advanced standing to a course;
- b. The granting of a particular mark or grade level in a piece of assessment or a unit overall;
- c. The opportunity to resubmit or resit failed assessment tasks outside of the University's established protocols for

doing this; or

- d. Any other matter that would give an unearned academic advantage to a student or applicant.

(46) Bribery is both academic and general misconduct in all instances and will be dealt with under the [Student Misconduct Regulations 2019](#). Penalties for proven bribery may include the full range of penalties available under that Regulation, including exclusion from the University. Where a bribe has been accepted, severe penalties will apply to the person who accepted the bribe as well as the person who offered it.

Falsification of Information

(47) Falsifying any information, including fabricating data, is a breach of academic integrity.

(48) Falsifying information includes:

- a. Providing incorrect or misleading statements about your academic qualifications, results, or history;
- b. Inventing or distorting data (including statistical data) which you rely upon in an assessment response to support an argument;
- c. Inventing or distorting arguments, whether represented as direct quotations or not, ascribed to other individuals; or
- d. Falsifying your identity or allowing another person to falsely claim to be you (impersonation).

(49) Falsifying information is academic misconduct in all instances and will be dealt with under the [Student Misconduct Regulations 2019](#). Penalties for proven falsification of information may include the full range of penalties available under that Regulation, including exclusion from the University.

Part D - Preventing Breaches of Academic Integrity

(50) VU aims, as far as possible, to support students to succeed with understanding and acting with academic integrity. This involves two key proactive elements:

- a. Academic apprenticeship;
- b. Assessment design.

Academic Apprenticeship

(51) The first teaching period at VU for every student who is enrolled in a course at AQF Level 5 and above includes a period of 'academic apprenticeship'. This applies regardless of their prior academic experience. VU acknowledges that students' past exposure to academic integrity expectations may have been varied, and will work with students to help grow this understanding.

(52) Key learning about academic integrity, as well as purpose-built training modules, are integrated into the academic apprenticeship period as part of VU's First Year College program.

(53) Students in their first year are purposively introduced to the norms and expectations around academic integrity at the commencement of their studies. This includes discipline specific norms around referencing and the acknowledgement of the work of others. Students explicitly gain practice in academic honesty through the use of rubrics that measure citation skills.

(54) Typically, an academic apprenticeship will provide students with practical exercises designed to:

- a. Develop language skills in a subject area. This may involve tasks requiring student to take ideas from different reading materials relevant to that subject area and to present these in written form using the appropriate

referencing system;

- b. Clarify referencing and quoting requirements;
- c. Clarify students' understanding around originality and file-sharing, and the risks of sharing their own completed work;
- d. Learn how to summarise; and
- e. Introduce students to the requirements and expectations arising under this Policy.

(55) The provision of academic integrity instruction during an academic apprenticeship is documented by the academic area delivering it (e.g. through the inclusion of a learning outcome, assessment rubric).

Assessment Design

(56) Assessment at VU is designed to be, as far as possible, not conducive to breaches of academic integrity of any kind.

(57) Assessment design complies with the requirements of the [Assessment for Learning - Standards for Assessment Procedure \(HE\)](#) and the options provided in the [Academic Integrity Guidelines](#).

Part E - Detecting Breaches of Academic Integrity

(58) Plagiarism can be detected in a variety of ways relevant to the nature of the work being undertaken, including but not limited to:

- a. Identification of copied material from common sources (e.g. textbooks);
- b. The use of pattern recognition software for textual written assessment or research materials;
- c. Expert identification of copied themes or ideas in visual arts, practical artifacts, performance pieces and other relevant activities;
- d. Creator or other expert identification of copied research data, formulae, software code or other non-textual material; or
- e. Examiner or peer reviewer noting of copied material in theses, works submitted for publication, or research findings.

(59) Contract cheating is difficult to detect in many instances. However, some methods of detection may include:

- a. Assessment responses that are very generalised, do not address the specific questions, and do not follow assignment instructions.
- b. Assessment responses that use style, language, terminology or regional spelling variation that is inconsistent with previous work by the student or with that used in the course of study.
- c. Assessor identification of the assessment response as identical or substantially equivalent to a response provided by other students, either in this unit or another unit.

(60) Collusion can be detected in a variety of ways relevant to the nature of the work being undertaken, including but not limited to:

- a. The use of pattern recognition software for textual written assessment or research materials;
- b. The identification by an assessor of substantially overlapping or identical assessment responses from two or more students in a unit; or
- c. Examiner or peer reviewer noting of substantially overlapping or identical material in theses, works submitted for publication, or research findings.

(61) Examination cheating is usually detected by examination invigilators during the course of an examination. The [Assessment for Learning - Examination Administration Procedure](#) provides guidance on this area. Examination cheating in online examinations may be detected via video conference invigilation where practical, supporting viva examinations if written results are in question, or other technological methods.

(62) Falsification of information can be detected in a variety of ways relevant to the nature of the information being fabricated or falsified, including:

- a. Checking of credential and qualification information with other providers;
- b. Checking of data sets used by the student to produce their findings; or
- c. Assessor noting of implausible data relied upon in assessment responses (e.g. fabricated statistics that are not consistent with known statistical data).

(63) Bribery is usually detected via a report by the staff member who is offered the bribe, or a witness to the bribery attempt. All VU staff are bound by policy and professional ethics to report any attempted bribery.

(64) In an assessment context, teaching staff carry the major responsibility for ensuring that breaches of academic integrity are detected and acted upon.

Part F - Responding to Breaches of Academic Integrity

(65) When dealing with a suspected or potential breach of academic integrity, VU will address the issue in a manner that is appropriate and proportionate to the severity of the conduct.

(66) The following forms of academic integrity breach by a student may be suitable for either an educative or punitive response:

- a. Plagiarism;
- b. Collusion;
- c. File-sharing.

(67) The following forms of academic integrity breach will be treated as a misconduct matter in all instances:

- a. Contract cheating;
- b. Examination cheating;
- c. Falsification of information;
- d. Bribery.

Educative Response

(68) An educative response by the teacher/lecturer or research supervisor may be provided to address:

- a. Inadequate or misleading citation, referencing or paraphrasing; or
- b. "Innocent" file-sharing where the student was unaware they were breaching University rules; or
- c. Inadvertent collusion arising mainly from a student's limited knowledge about academic integrity requirements, how to conform to academic conventions, or from carelessness or neglect, rather than an intention to deceive.

(69) Educative responses are most appropriate in a student's first study period with VU. Generally speaking, educative responses are not appropriate in later years of study. In particular, a student who has previously committed a breach of academic integrity in a previous study period will usually not be eligible for an educative response.

(70) The decision to address an academic integrity breach in an educative manner does not result in a finding of Academic Misconduct and should not appear on the student's record as an instance of misconduct. However, it must still be recorded on the Register of Academic Integrity Breaches.

(71) An educative response is, by its nature, non-punitive. An educative response does not include deduction of marks beyond the parameters of the usual marks allocated to the demonstration of referencing skills. (For example, allocating a grade of zero is not an educative response.)

(72) Educative responses may include:

- a. Requiring the student to remove any shared materials from file-sharing services;
- b. Providing verbal or written feedback to the student;
- c. Providing the opportunity to redo and resubmit the assessment;
- d. Deducting marks allocated for referencing, with explanation of the reasons;
- e. Referring the student to one of the academic assistance programs available within the University;
- f. Providing the student with examples of plagiarised and non-plagiarised texts to assist them in understanding the difference.

Misconduct

(73) If an academic integrity breach is not suitable for an educative response, it is treated as a misconduct matter.

(74) Investigations will be conducted in accordance with the processes established in the:

- a. [Student Misconduct Regulations 2019](#) and [Student Misconduct Procedure](#); or
- b. The misconduct processes established under the relevant industrial instrument (for staff).

(75) Student academic misconduct matters are investigated by the College in accordance with the provisions and processes prescribed in the [Student Misconduct Regulations 2019](#) and [Student Misconduct Procedure](#).

(76) Serious misconduct matters involving students will be referred to a Student Misconduct Panel.

(77) Serious penalties apply to a finding of academic misconduct.

Part G - Recording, Monitoring and Reporting on Academic Integrity Breaches

(78) VU will make, and maintain, a Register of Academic Integrity Breaches, recording the details of the breach, the response, and the action taken.

(79) All staff who detect a breach of academic integrity by a student must:

- a. Check the College Register when a breach of academic integrity occurs to ascertain if the student has a previous record of breaches (this may influence the response path); and
- b. Make a record of the matter on the College Register, regardless of the findings.

(80) The Director of Learning and Teaching or the College Manager will be responsible for keeping the register at the college level.

(81) Each college must make relevant entries on the Academic Integrity Register at regular intervals, including at the conclusion of each teaching block. The [Academic Integrity Guidelines](#) provide direction as to how to record entries on the Academic Integrity register.

(82) The Academic Integrity Register must be provided to the Integrity Office at the conclusion of each teaching block for units of study taught in Block Mode, or at the conclusion of the study period for units taught in other modes.

(83) On an annual basis, a summary of the academic integrity matters captured in the Integrity Office University Register must be provided to Academic Board for analysis and discussion.

Part H - Continuous Improvement

(84) Where a particular unit or course is identified as experiencing an unusual number of academic integrity breaches, the Course Chair will:

- a. Examine the content, type, mode and nature of assessment tasks to ensure that assessment is being designed to minimise academic integrity problems;
- b. Consider the learning design of the unit or course to ensure students are being provided with the best opportunity to succeed in assessment; and
- c. Consider any other factors that may be impacting the situation and find appropriate responses to address the issue. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - i. Requiring students to undertake academic scholarship training as part of their first unit of study in a course;
 - ii. Addressing explicitly the differences in expectations that cohorts of students who have entered from different pathways may have regarding academic integrity; and/or
 - iii. Providing additional exemplars to help students to grasp correct scholarship practice, including examples of poor practice for comparison.

Section 6 - Procedures

(85) Nil.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	10th November 2021
Review Date	10th November 2024
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	9th November 2021
Expiry Date	4th April 2023
Accountable Officer	John Germov Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer +613 99195077
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Research" - The creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include the synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative. This definition of research encompasses pure and oriented basic research, applied research and experimental development. This definition of research is consistent with a broad notion of research and experimental development (R&D) comprising creative work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge - including knowledge of humankind, culture and society - and to devise new applications of available knowledge. Activities that do not meet the definition of research include: i. scientific and technical information services ii. general-purpose or routine data collection iii. standardisation and routine testing iv. feasibility studies (except in R&D projects) v. literature reviews that do not include any critical assessment or report any new findings or original experimental work vi. commercial, legal and administrative aspects of patenting, plant breeders rights, copyright, material transfer agreements or intellectual property licensing, option and assignment activities, and royalties vii. routine computer programming, systems work or software maintenance.

"Academic Integrity" - A commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. From these values flow principles of behaviour that enable academic communities to translate ideals to action.

"Washing" - The use of Google Translate or similar tools to translate a plagiarised assessment task into another language and then back again into English, or where text/word spinning is used. This process involves automatically substituted generated synonyms and phrases and creating an ostensibly "new" document.

"Collusion" - Unauthorised collaboration on assessable work (written, oral or practical) with others. This can occur when a student presents group work as their own or as the work of another person.

"File Sharing" - The uploading to a website, or direct provision via messaging or social media, of a person's completed assessment tasks for a unit of study (whether they have been marked or not, and whether from the current year of study or earlier).

"Plagiarism" - The use of another person's intellectual output, presented without appropriate acknowledgement, which creates the impression that the work is being claimed as one's own.