

Academic Integrity Guidelines

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Guideline aims to assist academic and teaching staff to prevent, detect and respond to breaches of academic integrity by students.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Guideline applies to:

- a. all teaching staff who are involved in assessing the work of coursework students at (Victoria University) VU;
- b. all supervisory staff who are involved in supervising the research of research candidates at VU.

Section 3 - Definitions

(3) Academic Integrity

(4) 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.

(5) Contract Cheating

(6) 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.

(7) Research

(8) Washing

Section 4 - Policy

(9) See [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Section 5 - Procedures

(10) See [Student Misconduct Procedure](#).

Section 6 - Guidelines

(11) Academic integrity is important for any university in maintaining a high standard of student work and academic research. This involves the use of reputable academic resources and the full scholarly acknowledgement of the sources consulted in the creation of a piece of research. The integrity of the learning process must be maintained by

the University - it is vital that plagiarism, contract cheating and other forms of cheating are minimised wherever possible.

Part A - Defining Academic Integrity Breaches

(12) Academic integrity breaches may include:

- a. Plagiarism and failures of correct acknowledgement or citation practice.
- b. Submitting work written by another person.
- c. Paying for another person to write an assignment.
- d. Collusion, such as uncredited collaboration or copying other peoples' work
- e. Cheating or copying in exams.
- f. Offering or accepting bribes of any kind.

(13) Some forms of academic integrity breaches may be more straightforward to detect, and address, than others.

Part B - Plagiarism

(14) Plagiarism involves the insufficient (or even non-existent) acknowledgment of the research materials used in creating a student's assessment. This may be accidental (eg. poor referencing skills) or intentional (eg copying uncredited material from the internet and passing it off as one's own work).

(15) Plagiarism may constitute a deliberate attempt to deceive an assessor by claiming work as one's own or it may be an unintentional breach of academic integrity in circumstances where knowledge of citation/ attribution could have been reasonably expected.

How is Plagiarism Detected?

(16) Plagiarism can be detected in a variety of ways relevant to the nature of the work being undertaken. These include:

- a. The use of pattern recognition software like Turnitin for written assessment or research materials.
- b. Expert identification of copied themes or ideas in visual arts, practical artifacts, performance pieces and other relevant activities.
- c. Creator or other expert identification of copied research data, formulae, software code or other non-textual material.
- d. Examiner or peer reviewer noting copied material from theses, published work or research findings.

(17) To prevent plagiarism, academics may wish to:

- a. Discuss the values of academic integrity, student responsibilities and possible consequences for breaches throughout unit.
- b. Teach citational skills in class.
- c. Use Turnitin for assessments and examine the originality reports. Results will vary depending on the assignment and level of research required, but generally a result of over 30% is cause for concern.
- d. Require students to sign a pledge of originality on assessment coversheets .

Assessment Design to Prevent Plagiarism

(18) Plagiarism can be minimised by careful assessment design. This may include:

- a. Setting in-class assessments such as tests and tutorial oral presentations assigned at the start of semester.
- b. Using assessment rubrics that measure citational skills.
- c. Conducting in-class writing exercises for a baseline writing sample.

Using Turnitin to Detect Plagiarism

(19) The University uses the pattern recognition software program Turnitin to check written work for potential plagiarism. This is an important tool for use by staff and students that has many benefits for the University. These tools compare submitted text to a comprehensive database of work from across the world on a word by word basis.

(20) Originality Reports are not plagiarism reports, nor are percentage matches always necessarily indicative of levels of plagiarism - they are simply a tool to assist in bringing work with matching text to assessors' attention. Appropriate and accurate citation may well produce a higher score. As a result, the report requires interpretation and interrogation, and a case by case examination of whether plagiarism has occurred or not must still be performed.

(21) Staff can use pattern recognition software to generate Originality Reports to assist in the identification of written work that may warrant further investigation for potential plagiarism. They can also use the tool as a teaching tool to assist in conveying good academic integrity practices to their students.

(22) Students can use pattern recognition software to generate their own Originality Reports and to self-educate about appropriate acknowledgment.

Part C - Washing

(23) "Washing" is a new form of plagiarism in which a student uses Google Translate to translate their 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.

(24) Turnitin does not detect this process. However, if a substantial portion of the assessment is in clearly unidiomatic English, including odd synonyms or phrases or even gibberish, then the student has probably been washing and thus must be penalised for plagiarism.

Part D - Contract Cheating

(25) Contract cheating usually involves the purchase of an assignment or piece of research from another party. This may be facilitated by a fellow student, friend or purchased on a website. Other forms of contract cheating include paying another person to sit an exam in the student's place.

How to Detect Contract Cheating

(26) Contract cheating can be detected by pattern recognition software as well as expert analysis by the academic of the student's work as a whole, taking into account student contribution to class.

(27) To help prevent contract cheating, academic staff may:

- a. Discuss the values of academic integrity, student responsibilities and possible consequences for breaches throughout unit.
- b. Embed unique descriptors and instructor data into assessment specifications, then create Google alerts to track the terms on contract cheating sites.
- c. Regularly upload assessment specifications into Turnitin to provide match sources for contract cheating requests .
- d. Incorporate discipline relevant case studies that explore the problematic nature of contract cheating.

- e. Use well invigilated examinations.

Assessment Design To Prevent Contract Cheating

(28) Contract cheating may be reduced through careful course design. Academics may wish to:

- a. Use unique assessments that incorporate information from class discussions or lecture material
- b. Change assessment topics for each student cohort
- c. Use carefully designed group assessments so students cannot split up assessments into individual components
- d. Link tests with coursework assessments (i.e. reflecting on an assessment under test conditions)
- e. Assess the learning process, requiring students to show critical evidence of their learning process. Assessment proposals, drafts, annotated bibliographies, and other critical reflections would be appropriate

Part E - Collusion

(29) Collusion involves the copying or uncredited collaboration of material between students of unit materials (that is, the work of multiple people credited only by a single author).

How to Detect Collusion

(30) Collusion can be detected in a number of ways relevant to the nature of the work being undertaken, including:

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

Part F - Penalties

(31) The potential penalties for plagiarism or collusion may be either be in the form of an educative response or a punitive response.

(32) Contract cheating is generally treated as serious misconduct and a punitive response is appropriate.

Educative Responses to Minor Plagiarism

(33) Educative responses rather than punitive responses may be applied to minor acts of plagiarism where some effort has been made to cite sources, or where collusion has occurred in an inadvertent fashion (eg students working closely together submitting similar assignments).

(34) An academic staff member's choice to address inadequate acknowledgement in an educative manner does not result in a finding of Academic Misconduct and should not be recorded as an instance of misconduct or plagiarism on the student's file. However, it will still be recorded on the University's Register of Academic Integrity Breaches.

(35) Educative response is by its nature non-punitive. An educative response does not include a deduction of marks beyond the usual marks assigned for referencing skills. Assigning a grade of zero for a breach of academic integrity is a punitive rather than educative response.

(36) Educative responses may include:

- a. Providing verbal or written feedback to the student.

- b. Providing the opportunity to redo and resubmit the assessment.
- c. Deducting marks allocated for referencing, with explanation of the reasons.
- d. Referring the student to one of the academic assistance programs available within the University.
- e. Providing the student with examples of plagiarised and non-plagiarised texts to assist them in understanding the difference.

(37) In determining if an educative response is appropriate, staff members should consider:

- a. Other work submitted within the unit by the student.
- b. The student's stage within their course (ie first-year students may have less understanding of academic integrity and citation requirements than later-year students).
- c. The nature and level of the breach (ie reproducing an entire chapter of a text would be more serious than reproducing a paragraph).
- d. Whether the student has been involved in an academic integrity breach previously (staff should consult the Register of Academic Integrity Breaches to ascertain this).

Punitive Responses

(38) A punitive response is more appropriate for serious breaches of academic integrity such as intentional plagiarism, contract cheating, washing and exam cheating.

(39) Serious plagiarism involves copied or appropriated work formed with the clear intention to deceive an assessor, purchasing an assignment, premeditated cheating or other forms of misrepresentation. The effect of serious plagiarism is to compromise the assessment process.

(40) Punitive responses are only delivered as the conclusion of the Student Misconduct process and are handled under the [Student Misconduct Regulations 2019](#) and [Student Misconduct Procedure](#).

(41) Punitive responses to plagiarism are detailed in Part 6 of the [Student Misconduct Regulations 2019](#) and may include:

- a. Zero marks for the assessment task.
- b. Zero marks for the unit.
- c. Suspension from the course.
- d. Exclusion from the course.

How to Record an Educative Response

(42) Academics who decide to deliver an educative response must make a note of:

- a. the matter;
- b. the response selected, and
- c. the date it was given to the student

on the Register of Academic Integrity Breaches.

(43) The centralised University Register is currently maintained by the Integrity Office. Instructions for submitting the information can be obtained from the Integrity Office.

How to Pass on more Serious Matters to the Student Misconduct Process

(44) The University will investigate allegations of serious academic integrity breaches which amount to academic

misconduct. Investigation will be conducted in accordance with the processes established in the [Student Misconduct Procedure](#) or the misconduct processes established under the relevant industrial instrument for staff.

(45) A referral by a Senior Officer to the Student Misconduct Panel can be made by lodging a Student Misconduct referral form via Integrity Office (as per the [Student Misconduct Procedure](#)).

How to Record Breaches involving Research

(46) Where the allegation involves a possible breach of the University's [Research Integrity Policy](#), the senior officer should notify the VU Research as soon as possible. The senior officer will then consult the VU Research regarding the seriousness of the alleged misconduct and the appropriate allocation of responsibilities in dealing with the matter under the [Research Integrity Policy](#).

Section 7 - Supporting Documents and Information

(47) [Student Misconduct Procedure](#)

(48) [TEQSA: Good Practice Note: Addressing contract cheating to safeguard academic integrity \(4 October 2017\)](#)

(49) [TEQSA: Guidance Note: Academic Integrity \(29 March 2019\)](#)

(50) Buyer Beware: Study Finds Fake University Assignments Can Be Detected, Deakin University

(51) Contract cheating - What Can I Do to Help Prevent it in My Unit, Curtin University

Status and Details

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Accountable Officer	John Germov Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer +613 99195077
Responsible Officer	Deborah Tyler Director, Academic Quality and Standards +613 9919 4310
Enquiries Contact	Deborah Tyler Director, Academic Quality and Standards +613 9919 4310

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.

"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.

"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.