



Guide to Understanding and Avoiding Academic Malpractice

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Guide to Understanding & Avoiding Academic Malpractice

What is academic malpractice?

1. **Academic malpractice** is any activity – intentional or otherwise - that is likely to undermine the integrity essential to scholarship and research. It includes plagiarism, collusion, contract cheating, fabrication or falsification of results, and anything else that could result in unearned or undeserved credit for those committing it. Academic malpractice can result from a deliberate act of cheating or may be committed unintentionally. Whether intended or not, all incidents of academic malpractice will be treated seriously.

Types of academic malpractice

2. **Plagiarism** is the presentation, intentionally or unwittingly, of the ideas, work or words of other people without proper, clear and unambiguous acknowledgement. It includes the copying of the work of any other person, including another student, and the submission, in whole or in part, of a student's own work - self-plagiarism - where, for example, such work may have been previously submitted for a different assessment.
3. **Self-Plagiarism** is the submission, in whole or in part, of a student's own work, where that work has been submitted for a different assessment, either at the College or at a different institution. Students who use a previous piece of work or publication in a future piece of work should ensure that they properly reference themselves. As students cannot be awarded credit for the same work twice, the extent of referencing one's own work should be minimal.
4. **Collusion** may include instances where a student:
 - knowingly submits as entirely their own work that was undertaken in collaboration with another person without official approval;
 - collaborates with another student in the completion of work which they know is intended to be submitted as the other student's own unaided work;

- knowingly permits another student to copy all or part of their own work and to submit it as that student's own unaided work. Both the copier and the provider of the work are liable to be penalised.
5. The College does, however, allow collaboration where students work in groups as part of their programme of research or in the preparation of projects and similar assessments. The expectations and marking of the work should be made clear by the person setting the work and students should ensure that they are able to identify their contribution to the piece of work in group submissions.
 6. **Contract Cheating** is a specific form of academic malpractice, where a student submits work for assessment having used one or more of a range of services provided by a third party where such input is not permitted. Such services are often paid for by the student as part of a contract with a third party.
 7. Contract Cheating may include the use of essay writing services or essay mills, but also covers the provision of material that is non-essay based such as portfolios, wikis or blogs. Such material may be provided by a professional service or by a person known to the student and may be a paid or unpaid service. The receipt of, purchase or intention to purchase, material from a third party to use in full or in part in any form of assessed work is always considered malpractice.
 8. Contract cheating includes *Ghost Writing*. Ghost Writing by another person is when someone else writes or produces any work (paid or unpaid) that a student submits for their assessment, either fully or partially. This is fraudulent behaviour and is serious academic misconduct.
 9. **Fabrication or falsification** of data or results by individual students or groups of students is the presentation or inclusion in a piece of work of figures or data which have been made up or altered and which have no basis in verifiable sources; this may or may not involve other instances of academic malpractice.
 10. Falsifying data or material includes:
 - falsifying the data or material presented in reports or any other assessment.
 - falsely purporting to have undertaken experimental or experiential work or to have obtained data about such work undertaken by others.
 - the fabrication of references or a bibliography.
 11. **Impersonation** is the assumption by one person of the identity of another person with intent to deceive, either in an examination or other forms of assessment.
 12. **Cheating in exams** or other time-constrained assessment is another form of academic malpractice. It entails the possession of unauthorised material or the use or attempted use of unauthorised or unfair means. Specifically, it is an offence to:

- copy from the work of another candidate, or allow copying from one's own work;
- obtain assistance from another candidate, or provide assistance to them, by whatever means;
- impersonate another candidate, or allow oneself to be impersonated;
- introduce any written or printed material into an examination room (unless expressly permitted by the regulations for that assessment);
- Introduce any electronically stored information into an examination room (unless expressly permitted by the regulations for that assessment);
- use a mobile phone or similar electronic devices;
- disrupt the examination room by causing undue noise or disturbance;
- talk, pass written communication or make social media contact with any person other than a properly authorised invigilator or another authorised member of staff during the examination;
- deliberately destroy any notes or rough working which you make during the course of the examination;
- gain access to any unauthorised material relating to an examination during or before the specified time.

13. For those taking examinations online, it is an offence to:

- Confer with anyone during the examination
- Take copies of the test questions (written or screenshot)
- Share details of the examination with anyone
- Ask for support to complete the examination
- Work with others to complete the exam
- Share their work
- Post exam questions to a model answer site (even if the answers provided are not used)
- Respond positively to a request for help with a question, even if the question is not seen.
- Be an observer to a group chat about the exam whilst it is ongoing

By submitting their answers, students are confirming that it is their own work.

14. **Proof reading and copyediting services:** Whilst using proof reading and copyediting services, paid or unpaid, may not always constitute a form of cheating, it depends on the scale of the work undertaken. For example, major changes by a third party which lead to students submitting work which is substantially different from what they originally wrote is not legitimate. While students may ask someone to read through their work and suggest changes, such changes must be implemented by the student to ensure that the submitted work is the student's own.

Avoiding academic malpractice

15. The most common form of academic malpractice is plagiarism. You can avoid this by making sure that whenever you quote a phrase or longer from another person's words (whether from a book, article, website or any other source), you **put the words in quotation marks** and give a proper reference to the source.

16. Instances of plagiarism include:

- referencing that is so inadequate that it undermines the integrity of the work.
- a bibliography that omits texts drawn on in the main body of the work (compounding the failure to cite them in the main text and/or footnote references).
- more than isolated examples of the omission of quotation marks from quotes.
- close paraphrasing of phrases or sentences of someone else's material without direct and immediate acknowledgement (anything more than isolated examples where the source is referenced properly elsewhere).
- extensive misuse of secondary quotations (i.e., when you give the impression that you have looked up a text yourself when in fact you have found the words quoted in another book/article which you have not cited).
- copying the work of another student or submitting material which has been acquired from 'essay banks' or via an essay writing service.

Poor academic practice

17. Often students starting out on degree-level study need help learning how to present their work in a clear and ethical way. Inadvertently, they may slip into 'poor practice', which is not in itself malpractice but which, if not checked, may lead to it. It is important to learn from any feedback your tutors give you about this. Instances of poor academic practice include:

- inadequate referencing, e.g., failure to repeat footnote references each time a text is drawn on
- an incomplete bibliography, which, as a result of carelessness, fails to include sources mentioned in the main text and references, or gives inadequate or inaccurate information about them
- isolated examples of the omission of quotation marks from quotations (i.e., cases where sloppiness or a misunderstanding of academic conventions is to blame)
- close paraphrasing of a phrase or sentence of someone else's material without direct and immediate acknowledgement (again, brief and isolated examples, where the source is referenced properly elsewhere in the work)
- limited collusion between students as evidenced by structure, source or copied text; this includes cases where the written work is original throughout
- failure to give a complete record of the sources drawn on (e.g., omitting reference to the secondary source when using secondary quotations).

18. Tutors are trained to distinguish carefully between **academic malpractice** and **poor academic practice**. There is no penalty for poor academic practice, except that the piece of work will probably receive a lower mark than it might have done otherwise, since quality of presentation forms part of the normal marking criteria.

Investigating malpractice & the consequences of malpractice

19. The College and any validating universities view academic malpractice as a disciplinary matter. Suspected cases of academic malpractice are dealt with according to the relevant Academic Malpractice Policy and Procedure. Malpractice Panels or Tribunals carefully assess the level of infringement, if any. Panels have a range of penalties open to them depending on the severity of the case and the degree of intentionality or deceit, including the cancellation of marks for the unit, reduction of a degree class, or cessation of the student's course.