OUR EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUR ACADEMIC WRITING 2021-22

Understanding our expectations will benefit your learning & help avoid academic misconduct

Knowing what is expected in academic work will help you demonstrate good academic practice and avoid problems such as academic misconduct. Plagiarism is the most common form of student academic misconduct and includes using the words, images & other media, or ideas & structure from the work of others, without acknowledgment.

Academic misconduct is taken seriously by the university; it is not acceptable behaviour and can put your academic career at risk. The University does not distinguish between intentional and unintentional academic misconduct. Therefore, it is important that ALL students understand what is expected for their academic work at university.

Understanding the following general expectations is a good place to start and will help avoid plagiarism. Your Programme of study may also supplement this with more specific guidance in relation to your subject area.

1. REFERENCING (CITING) YOUR SOURCES

- You are expected to be able to use an appropriate referencing system (e.g. Harvard, APA etc.) & follow the agreed way to acknowledge sources on your programme & courses
- Reference all sources used in submitted work; not just academic publications, but also other sources (e.g. web pages, lecture slides, teaching resources). Failure to do so is to present other people's work as if it is your own.
- Reference the sources you have accessed in full and consulted directly; these are called 'primary sources'.
- References within primary sources you have read are 'secondary sources'. Referencing these without reading them is called 'secondary citation'. This is not a fair representation of your research, reading & understanding.
- On the rare occasion an essential source cannot be accessed in full, secondary citation is acceptable by acknowledging both the secondary source & the primary source citing it (e.g. "…X cited in Y…").
- If choosing to replicate or adapt the structure of a document found elsewhere (e.g. a questionnaire), this should be stated clearly and referenced at the outset.

2. SELECTING YOUR SOURCES

- You are expected to be aware of what are, and what are not, appropriate sources for each of your assessments
- Other student work should never be used as a source unless explicitly advocated by course organisers as appropriate (e.g. group work); on these occasions the source must still be acknowledged in order to represent your own work honestly. Similarly, do not allow other students to access your written work unless advised to.
- Do not re-use any of your own material previously submitted at another institution, or material submitted for credit on another course or assessment at the University of Edinburgh; this is considered 'self-plagiarism'.
- Sometimes parts of 'linked' assessments (e.g. research proposal & dissertation) may legitimately share some content; the course organisers concerned will be aware of this and will advise.

3. WRITING IN YOUR OWN WORDS

- You are expected to develop the ability to write in your own words
- Other people's ideas & writing should be understood and rewritten in your own original words (your own 'voice') as well as being correctly referenced.
- Blocks of copied text should not be reused verbatim or with minor adjustments. Close paraphrasing (e.g. rearranging & substituting existing words) is still considered plagiarism - even when referenced correctly.
- Direct "quotations" can be used sparingly to illustrate your arguments. However these sections of copied text must be referenced AND must be in quotation marks to show where other people's words begin & end.
- Your notetaking must distinguish your words and ideas from those which belong to others; losing track of the origin could mean unreferenced, verbatim material being unintentionally transferred into your submitted work.
- Submitting work written by other people, including material downloaded from online essay repositories or purchased online are never appropriate; this is cheating.
- Submitting text generated by an automated translation tool is not ordinarily acceptable; ask if you are unsure.
- Input from a third-party proofreader must be restricted to minor edits & comments aimed at improving the clarity of written English. It is essential you adhere to University guidance on use of a proofreader.

UNDERSTAND WHAT'S EXPECTED – ASK FOR HELP – AVOID ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

TYPES OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Academic misconduct is defined by the University as the use of unfair means in any University assessment. This includes assisting a student to make use of unfair means, and doing anything prejudicial to the good conduct of the assessment. Examples of misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, self-plagiarism (that is, submitting the same work for credit twice at the same or different institutions), collusion, falsification, cheating (including contract cheating, where a student pays for work to be written or edited by somebody else), deceit, and personation (that is, impersonating another student or allowing another person to impersonate a student in an assessment).

- University of Edinburgh information on academic misconduct:
  https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/conduct/academic-misconduct/what-is-academic-misconduct

WHAT HAPPENS IN MISCONDUCT CASES?

It is academic staff who identify cases of academic misconduct; this usually occurs during the process of marking and may involve tools such as Turnitin. Suspected academic misconduct cases are then discussed with the School Academic Misconduct Officer (SAMO) who makes a decision about the seriousness of the case based on the nature and the extent of the issues. Serious cases of academic misconduct can result in mark penalties. Students should be aware that a penalty on just one course mark can prevent progression and even prevent the award of a degree.

- University of Edinburgh procedures for investigating academic misconduct are available:
  https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/academic-misconduct

WHAT ABOUT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES OVER WHICH I HAVE NO CONTROL?

We are sympathetic towards the personal/health difficulties sometimes faced by students; however, these cannot excuse academic misconduct. There are many support mechanisms in place to assist students who find that personal/health pressures are jeopardising their academic performance. These include extensions, special circumstances and disability adjustments. We encourage students to speak to their PTs/Schools for information on how to apply for these. It is ultimately preferable to miss a deadline than to submit work that is ethically compromised – depending on the situation, many of the above support mechanisms can be accepted late.

WHERE CAN I SEEK HELP, ADVICE & INFORMATION

All students should make themselves fully aware of the expectation on academic misconduct. If you have any questions about coursework, assessments and good academic practice, you should speak to academic staff. Programme Directors, Course Organisers, your Personal Tutor, and your School Academic Misconduct Officer, are there to advise you. Your Personal Tutor can also offer guidance on effective study and essay writing skills. The following information is relevant to all students at the University of Edinburgh

- CiteThemRight is a comprehensive online guide to the mechanics of citation for different referencing styles and is accessible to all UoE students (EASE login needed)
  https://www-citethemrightonline-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/

- Institute of Academic Development (IAD) has various resources on good academic practice & study skills:
  https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/

- EU Students Association (EUSA) webpages have helpful information:
  https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/academic/misconduct