

Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct is **not just deliberate cheating**. It can be unintentional and, **whether intended or not, significant grade penalties can be applied to affected assignments**. It is the responsibility of every student to understand what is and is not permitted; lack of awareness will not prevent grade penalties being applied.

The university takes a **zero-tolerance approach to collusion** (doing assessed work together when not allowed), **falsification** (knowingly providing false information, data etc. in assignments), and the **use of any kind of essay-writing services or essay mills**. Students found guilty of these practices may be subject to formal disciplinary procedures as well as very heavy grade penalties.

The most common form of misconduct we encounter in the School of Social and Political Science is **plagiarism**, including **self-plagiarism** (copying your own work from one assignment to another).

How to avoid penalties for plagiarism and self-plagiarism

Plagiarism is giving the impression that information you have included in an assignment is your own idea or your own words, when actually it is not. Every year, students receive penalties for plagiarism despite having no intention of doing anything wrong, so it is really important that you understand how to reference ideas and indicate quotes from others' work correctly.

To avoid plagiarism, write in your own words (your own 'voice') as much as possible, including in your notes so to avoid accidental plagiarism, providing a citation (see below) to show whose ideas you are using. Close paraphrasing, i.e. **using a chunk of someone else's text and just rearranging or changing some words, is plagiarism**.

Use a recognised referencing system such as the Harvard system. Every time you include information such as facts or ideas from others' work, add an **in-text citation**, giving the author(s) and published date of the source (paper, book, website etc), like this:

Pro-environmental values do not necessarily lead to action (Barr, 2006).

Then list all the sources you have cited in a **reference list** at the end of the assignment. **Do not use other students' work as sources for your own** unless this is advised by the course organiser.

How to cite sources you haven't read yourself, ONLY if it's impossible to read them: If you read an article/book by Smith that refers to work by Zhang, and you want to discuss the work of Zhang in your assignment, read Zhang's work yourself and give your own summary of it. If that is not possible, then you should cite what you have read about Zhang's work in Smith's article/book like this:

Zhang, 2015, as cited by Smith, 2019 OR Zhang, 2015, in Smith, 2019

Using someone else's words (direct quoting): Use quotation marks (" ") to indicate where you have quoted (copied the exact words of) someone else, AND provide the reference, including page number(s) where the quote is to be found in the original source, like this:

Values are "guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity" (Schwartz, 1994, p.21). Avoid using a lot of quotes; more than 2 or 3 in an essay normally means you are not expressing ideas in your own words enough.

If you copy statistics, tables, diagrams etc directly from others' work you should clearly state the source, including a page number if possible.

You must not copy from an assignment you previously submitted for credit, either at this university or another. This is **self-plagiarism**. If you retake a course, an assignment (or any part of it) submitted one year cannot be resubmitted in a different year. Similarly, you must not copy from a previously submitted assignment into a resit assignment for the same course, or from an assignment for one course into an assignment for a different course, either in the same year or a different year.

To detect plagiarism we use Turnitin, which compares students' assignments against a constantly-updated global database of existing work. Students who have included plagiarised or self-plagiarised material in their work will be reported to an Academic Misconduct Officer for investigation. Penalties range from 10 marks deducted to the assignment grade being reduced to zero.

Do not put your work through Turnitin yourself before submission. This can lead to you being investigated for academic misconduct by making it seem that an identical assignment already exists.

Use of translation software/services and proof-reading services

You must not use translation software or services (including unpaid services of friends or relatives) to translate your assignments from another language into English, as this means the work is not yours alone. It is best to write as well as submit your work in English. You are allowed to write in another language and then translate the work yourself but this is not very efficient.

A proof-reader is a person who may make suggestions for minor changes to spelling, punctuation, grammar, and syntax in order to improve the readability of written assignments. There is a University of Edinburgh proof-reading service for students whose first language is not English, and for those who have a learning adjustment schedule allowing use of a proof-reader. You are also allowed to use a proof-reader (a friend, family member, or paid professional) who is not part of the University service but **there are strict guidelines about what proof-readers are allowed to do**. You must read these guidelines and share them with anyone you ask to proof-read your work who is not part of the University proof-reading service. If you do not follow the guidance, you may be reported for academic misconduct if the proof-reader has altered the work too much for it to be considered solely yours. The guidelines are available here: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/taught-students/student-conduct/academic-misconduct>.

For further details on plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, and how to avoid them, visit the university's Institute for Academic Development webpage on good academic practice:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/undergraduate/good-practice>

Also see this useful video and further information on the University website:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/taught-students/student-conduct/academic-misconduct>

If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything related to matters of academic misconduct, contact your personal tutor or the School Deputy Academic Misconduct Officer, Dr Nathan Coombs (nathan.coombs@ed.ac.uk).