

Academic Offences

Plagiarism, collusion and cheating in exams – the facts!

An academic offence can take many forms and is defined by DMU as a deliberate attempt to avoid or change the terms of assessment in “an unauthorised manner and by unfair means”. Any act that comes under this definition could be seen as an academic offence but in practice, the most common offences are plagiarism, collusion and cheating in exams.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism covers a wide range of activities, for example:

- Copying from another student’s work.
- Copying or paraphrasing source material without acknowledgement.
- Downloading info/text from the Internet without acknowledgement.
- Submitting group work that you claim to be your own.
- Submitting group work without acknowledging contributors.
- You might even use notes that you copy from a book or another student and forget it is not in your own words.

What will happen if you plagiarise?

The marking tutor will first flag your assignment and the module leader will then decide if the irregularities are likely to be bad academic practice or plagiarism. If they are undecided or think it is due to plagiarism they will forward your assignment to the Academic Practice Officer.

You will then get a letter inviting you to a meeting with the Academic Practice Officer.

You can have a friend, relative or a Student Union Adviser representing you at this meeting. You can provide a written statement instead of

attending the meeting with the Academic Practice Officer. The meeting will take place whether you attend or not, but your side of events will not be heard if you don’t go, so it is always best to attend or provide written representation.

The Academic Practice Officer should explain to you firstly why they have asked you to the meeting and outline why they think there are problems with your assignment. You will then be asked to explain how you completed your assignment and the irregularities that the marking tutor has identified. Advice will be given on avoidance and to suggest further training if needed.

It is advisable to admit to your offence readily and explain honestly what happened. Remember that the Academic Practice Officers do not call you to a meeting without evidence so they usually already have some idea of what happened. Don’t make the mistake of trying to justify your actions if you realise you have done something wrong. This process is simply intended to make sure you understand how this happened so that you can avoid it in future. The penalty acts as a deterrent and ensures that no-one ever benefits from committing an academic offence

If you are a 1st year, it may be deemed that the irregularities are unintentional errors, and it is bad academic practice. Your module leader or another appropriate academic will discuss how to avoid this in the future and training given if appropriate. This will be written in your student file.

USEFUL CONTACTS:

DSU Welfare
 First Floor
 Campus Centre Building
 Mill Lane
 Leicester
 LE2 7DR
 Tel: 0116 257 6307
<http://www.demontfortstudents.com/welfare>

Opening Hours:

Mon – Wed: 9.30am-3.45pm
 Thurs: 9.30am-6.30pm
 (Term time)
 Thurs: 9.30pm-3.45pm
 (Vacation)
 Fri: 1pm-3.45pm

If it is a second offence of bad academic practice or you are a returning or masters student you will be called to a meeting with the Academic Practice Officer. You will get the right to present any mitigating circumstances and the Academic Practice Officer will take this into account when they make their decision. You can have your assignment or component mark set aside and you will be required to complete it again as if for the first time. You may fail the component and the mark capped. You may fail the module and the mark capped. You will get a formal written warning placed on in your student file.

If you deny the offence and the Academic Practice Officer believes it is plagiarism or it is your 2nd offence or it is deemed a major offence. It can be referred to the Academic Offence Panel.

If this is the case, the matter will move to the next stage, which is an Academic Offence Panel Hearing. A Student Union Adviser or a friend can represent you at this hearing. This will take place whether you attend or not, but your side of events will not be heard if you don't. At the hearing the Academic Practice Officer will present the case against you to the panel. You will also get to present your case and you can ask the faculty representative questions and also call witnesses if it is relevant. You will also get the right to present any mitigating circumstances and these will be taken into account by the panel when making its decision. The panel will then make a decision based on the evidence presented to it.

The Penalty for Plagiarism:

There are a range of possible penalties, including: Set aside component or assignment concerned and require you to complete it as if for the first time. Failure in component and the mark capped. Failure in the module and the mark capped. Failure in the year and the marks capped. Suspension for one year. Reduction in degree classification for final year students. Exclusion.

Collusion**What it is and what will happen if you commit collusion?**

Collusion is when a student copies another student's work and tries to pass it off as their own work. Being party to collusion is when a student knowingly gives their assignment or their research to another student who copies it. In this situation, both students will have committed an academic offence. It is very easy to decide with your fellow classmates to complete your assignments at the same time using the same notes.

However, this makes it easy to duplicate phrases, use the same quotes and structure your assignment in the same way. The University will see this as collusion, unless you are doing authorised group work. It is hard to say no to a friend who is struggling with their course especially if they have genuine personal problems preventing them from studying.

However, if they copy parts or all of your assignment you will face failing your work, failing the module, failing the year, reduction in degree classification or possible exclusion. Collusion is dealt with using the same procedure as plagiarism **please refer to that section of the leaflet**

Cheating in Exams

The University regulations state that you commit the offence of cheating in an exam if you:

- Deliberately acquire advance knowledge of the detailed content of the examination.
- Copy from the exam paper of another student.
- Allow another student to copy from your exam paper.
- Obtain any other assistance from another student.
- Use or have access to unauthorised material.
- Impersonate another student or allow yourself to be impersonated.
- Provide information to another student in an exam.
- Have access to an electronic communication device.
- Do any other thing with the intention of gaining unfair advantage over other students.
- It is easy to lose your head in exams and forget that you have items in your pockets that if discovered will be an academic offence. Examples of unauthorised material includes:
 - A programmable calculator.
 - Mobile telephone.
 - Pager or any other communication device.
 - Any notes, drawings, tracings or books (including electronically stored information) other than those that are specifically permitted.

If you are caught having 'access' to any of these items you will have committed an offence. Having 'access' means having the items on your person or on or by your desk.

What will happen if you Cheat in Exams?

The invigilator will confiscate any item, which is not allowed in the exam and you will have to pick this up from your faculty at a later date. You will then get a letter inviting you to a meeting with the Academic Practice Officer. You will be asked to explain what happened at this meeting.

Penalties range from having your marks reduced for the specific piece of work to failing the work/exam concerned or failing the module. If it is believed that you have used, '...considerable ingenuity and forethought in preparing and/or secreting unauthorised material or there is any evidence or suspicion of collusion...', it will be referred to the Academic Offences Panel.

The Penalty for Cheating:

There are a range of penalties for cheating from failing the exam, failing the module, failing the year right through to being excluded.

Why have a representative?

- A representative would be there for support and independent advice.
- To ensure the meeting follows the correct procedure.
- To prompt you if you forget to say something due to nerves.
- To present your case to the Academic Offence Panel

More information about the University's academic offences policy can be found in Chapter 4 of the DMU's general Regulations available on the website