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Academic Integrity Policy – *for students*

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Academic Integrity Policy

Precepts

As an academic community, all students and staff at the University of Westminster are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of academic conduct.

The University's expectation is that all grades obtained by students must result from the student's own efforts to learn and develop. Credit is awarded as a result of assessments which are designed to demonstrate that a (given) student has fulfilled the learning outcomes in a module. For all individual assessments, the work completed must demonstrate the student's own learning. For group assessments, the expectation is normally that students should indicate the extent of their involvement in a given project.

There are specific examination regulations which define acceptable behaviour in formal scheduled examinations and other time-limited assessments. These are set out in Section 10 and Section 7 of the Handbook of Academic Regulations.

The overarching principles set out in this policy apply to all forms of assessment, and the specific requirements relating to referencing and plagiarism refer specifically to coursework and other forms of written assessment.

Any academic work which is not completed in accordance with these guiding principles and regulations may be defined as poor scholarship, or academic misconduct.

1. Maintaining Academic Integrity

1.1.   Academic integrity is concerned with the ethical code that applies to the standards by which the academic community operates. It represents the values of honesty, fairness and respect for others. While this encompasses the expectation that students will not cheat in assessments nor deliberately try to mislead examiners and assessors, it is just as important to emphasise the positive role that academic integrity plays in each student's intellectual and professional development and in their successful transition to graduate employment and future careers. Students who embrace academic integrity understand that they must produce their own work, acknowledging explicitly any material that has been included from other sources or legitimate collaboration, and to present their own findings, conclusions or data based on appropriate and ethical practice.

1.2.   There are conventions of academic practice, such as established referencing and citation protocols, which both display and ensure academic integrity. The acquisition of relevant study skills such as effective note-taking, ability to critically evaluate other writers' theories and concepts and presentation skills, will help students to understand these conventions. Failure to adhere to these conventions can result in poor academic practice or, if there is a clear intention to deceive examiners and assessors, to unfair and/or dishonest academic practice.

1.3.   The University's expectation is that all marks obtained by students must result from the student's own efforts to learn and develop. Credit is awarded as a result of assessments which are designed to demonstrate that a (given) student has fulfilled the learning outcomes in a module. For all individual assessments, the work completed must demonstrate the student's own learning. For group assessments, the expectation is normally that students should indicate the extent of their involvement in a given project.

1.4.   Students and staff have a shared responsibility in upholding the values of academic integrity in their work:

- **Students** are responsible for adopting the academic integrity approach in all aspects of their studies and for developing good academic practice. Students should familiarise themselves with their responsibilities in relation to those values and the consequences of transgression. Students should take advantage of training, guidance and other

information made available to them so that they may develop skills and knowledge on good academic practice.

- **Staff** are responsible for adopting the academic integrity approach in their work. Staff involved in the teaching, tutoring or supervision of students must, with appropriate guidance, be able to support their students in adopting the academic integrity approach, including by signposting them to relevant training and guidance if necessary. Staff should set an example for their students on how the core values of academic integrity are put into practice.

1.5.   In order to adhere to the University's definition of academic integrity, students are expected to abide by the following conventions when completing work for assessment:

1.5.1.   Acknowledge all sources of information, knowledge and ideas used when completing work for assessment by consistently and correctly using an acceptable referencing system.

1.5.2.   Produce work that is the product of their own, individual efforts. An exception to this is where an assignment brief specifically requires a single piece of work be submitted on behalf of a group of students.

1.5.3.   Declare when they have used work before in a previous assessment (whether successful or not) using an acceptable referencing system.

1.5.4.   Present accurate information and data that has been obtained appropriately and which is a fair representation of their own endeavours, knowledge and understanding.

1.5.5.   Adhere to and comply with all applicable regulatory, legal and professional obligations and ethical requirements therein.

1.6   The University will make information on how to maintain academic integrity available to students in ways that are appropriate and accessible. However, at all times, it is the sole responsibility of the student to act in a way that is consistent with the Academic Integrity Policy and to seek advice and guidance if they are unclear.

2.   Generative AI

2.1   Using a GenAI as a complementary tool to enhance a student's understanding and generate ideas early in their academic journey is ethically acceptable. However, it is unequivocally unethical and against the principles of academic integrity to use GenAI to produce content for assessed assignments. Doing this is effectively cheating.

2.2   If students use a Generative AI tool like GrammarlyGO or ChatGPT to help with an assessment/assignment, then:

- Using Generative AI to produce original content and claiming it as their work is strictly prohibited. Student assignments and exams should demonstrate reflection and critical analysis generated by their thinking.
- It is unacceptable to submit a draft essay or other written output to a GenAI and request the system to rephrase it in proper English or restructure it unless it is part of the assessment brief.
- Including outputs from GenAI systems, such as passages of text or images, in an assessment submission without disclosing what tool has been used and how it has been used it is not permitted.
- Improper use of Generative AI for an assessment will be considered by the University of Westminster as plagiarism, and will be subject to penalties.

2.3 The University of Westminster recognises that Generative AI tools can legitimately support learning in several ways. Some examples of ways in which Generative AI can normally be used as a tool to support learning include:

- Assisting with grammar and spelling checks.
- Utilising Generative AI to identify internet keywords for an internet search.
- Aiding in the planning and development of an outline structure for a written assessment.
- Generating ideas for graphics, images, and visuals.
- Obtaining basic explanations of concepts.
- Assisting in debugging code.
- Helping overcome 'writer's block'.

2.4 It is important to note that whilst Generative AI tools can be useful for some aspects of student assessments, there will always be important parts that require a students own original and distinctive input, demonstrating understanding and critical thinking, structuring, and refining an argument, reflecting on their practice and personal experience, keeping up to date with research, and accurate referencing and citations.[1]

3. Proofreading

3.1 Proofreading should initially be undertaken by students themselves; it can be a valuable learning experience for students to identify their own errors and inconsistencies. However, the University recognises that, in the course of producing a high-quality piece of work for assessment, students may wish to ask a third party, or use other tools like Grammarly (freely available at the University) to proofread work prior to submission.

3.2 Proofreading might be undertaken by peers, housemates, family members, academic members of staff, professional proofreading companies, or use other tools like Grammarly. Appropriate members of staff may use their professional judgement to provide advice and guidance during the course of formative assessment, based on the individual needs of a student to maximise their opportunity to learn and understand what is expected of them academically.

3.3 In some disciplines and for particular pieces of assessment it may not be appropriate for any proofreading to take place e.g. where correct grammar is part of the assessment criteria or assessed work submitted relating to language and translation. For example, proofreading may not be acceptable for language courses, as language proficiency is one of the key learning outcomes.

3.4 The University acknowledges that some assessments require students to work closely to produce a collaborative piece of work for assessment. The content for these assignments will necessitate a process of drafting and re-drafting of content by a number of different members of the team. This process is a key part of the learning experience. In these cases, students may actively edit content of other students within the group although it is expected that, collectively, the group is bound by the expectations set out in this Policy in respect to engaging with further third parties or other tools like Grammarly. This exception only applies to those pieces of work that are explicitly assessed as part of a group exercise. No form of collusion should take place regarding standard individual pieces of work and when detected, such cases may be subject to referral under the processes outlined in the Academic Misconduct Regulations. If a student is unaware if proofreading can be used for an assessment they should seek advice from their Module Leader.

3.5 A third party proofreader, or a tool such as Grammarly are not expected to actively amend existing or create new content in draft work; instead, they should support the student by identifying errors and/or making suggestions relating to spelling and grammar, but not creating, content.

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[1] [Academic misconduct | University of Westminster, London](#)

3.6   Any third-party reviewing work should be familiar with this policy and agree to operate within its expectations. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the proofreader is aware of the Policy and no proofreading should be undertaken if the individual concerned does not agree to align their practice with the conditions detailed below.

The University considers it acceptable for proofreaders to:

- Identify spelling and typographical errors.
- Highlight formatting errors or inconsistencies.
- Identify spelling/grammar/typographical errors in labelling of diagrams, charts or figures.
- Identify typographical errors in equations.
- Draw attention to repeated phrases or omitted words.

The University does not consider it acceptable practice for proofreaders to amend existing content whether through addition or reduction and, in particular, they must not:

- Identify poor grammar e.g. tense use, verb form, sentence structure, word order.
- Rewrite passages of text to clarify the meaning.
- Highlight a sentence or paragraph that is overly complex or where the intended meaning is not clear.
- Identify errors in the referencing system applied.
- Change any words or figures, except to correct spelling.
- Check or rewrite calculations, formulae, equations or computer code.
- Rearrange or reformat passages of text.
- Contribute any additional material to the original.
- Redraw, alter or relabel diagrams, charts or figures.
- Alter argument or logic, where faulty.
- Implement or alter a referencing system or add to references.
- Check or correct facts, data calculations, formulae or equation.
- Correcting errors identified in the reference system applied.
- Translate text drafted by students, noting that this does not prohibit translation of source material as long as it is properly referenced.

3.7   Students who submit assessment where proofreading has compromised the authenticity of that work and who have acted outside of the limitations set out in this policy will be investigated under the Academic Misconduct Regulations. It is the student's responsibility to to check their own piece of work prior to submission to ensure that it is in line with University policy and expectations.

4.   Resources for students

4.1   The academic integrity approach centres on a community and culture of learning. Resources and guidance are an integral part of university study and academic life.

4.2   Academic integrity is addressed as part of induction in all courses at all levels of study and is inbuilt as part of the curriculum in taught courses.

4.3   To support students to develop good academic practice, students can access the plagiarism and Introduction to Generative AI course anytime under the '*Learning Resources'* tab in Blackboard. Training in academic integrity is provided via online sources located on the 'Study Sills and Training' website. Academic advice is made available where a student is identified as struggling with aspects of academic integrity or to understand good practice.

4.4   Turnitin and Safe-Assign, text-matching systems used by the University, may be used in a formative, developmental way to assist students in understanding the appropriate use of sources and raising awareness of plagiarism. This may help students to develop their authorial voice, particularly when students discuss Turnitin originality reports with tutors, supervisors or other academics.

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Links to resources:
[Guidance on the acceptable use of Generative AI (Word)](#)
[Academic misconduct | University of Westminster, London](#)
[Study skills and training | University of Westminster, London](#)
[Academic regulations | University of Westminster, London](#)

5.   Breaches of Academic Integrity

5.1   A student will be regarded as being in breach of the Academic Integrity Policy if they act or behave in a manner that is inconsistent with the University's general definition of academic integrity.

5.2   A breach of the Academic Integrity Policy may occur when a student knowingly acts in a way that is contrary to the policy or does so inadvertently by means of careless scholarship. Inexperience, intention, lack of intention or unfamiliarity with the Academic Integrity Policy will not be regarded as a defence in the event that the policy is breached.

5.3   Any breach of the Academic Integrity Policy will be categorised as either poor scholarship or academic misconduct. These are dealt with in different ways according to the procedure described in Section 10 of the Academic Regulations.

5.4   Examples of academic misconduct include:

- **Plagiarism**: the use of ideas, intellectual property or work of others without acknowledgement or, where relevant, permission.

- **Generative AI:** Using Generative AI systems (such as ChatGPT, Bing Char or DALL-E) to produce content that is then submitted as an original piece of work to be assessed is an Academic Offence. Please see further and more detailed guidance below on the acceptable use of Generative AI.

- **Self-plagiarism**: the use of work, without appropriate referencing, that has been submitted for assessment, whether successful or not, by the same student in this University or any other institution. This will not apply where a student is making a resubmission for the same assessment component in the same module, unless specifically prohibited in the assessment information.

- **Collusion**: the unauthorised collaboration between two or more students resulting in the submission of work that is unreasonably similar, but which is submitted as being the product of the submitting student's individual efforts.

- **Commissioning**: engaging another person or organisation to complete or undertake an assessment, whether a financial transaction has taken place or not.

- **Dishonest Practice**: the presentation of fictitious or distorted documents, data, evidence or any other material, including submitting the work of another person as if it is their own. This includes the submission of false evidence in an application to the Mitigating Circumstances Board or to the Academic Appeals Board.

- **Research misconduct**: failure to obtain ethical approval for a research project or failure to comply with regulatory, legal and professional obligations for research projects.

- **Cheating**: any action before, during or after an assessment or examination which has the potential for the student to gain an unfair advantage in assessment or assist another student to do so. This includes failure to adhere to the examination regulations.

5.5   These lists are not exhaustive, and the Academic Integrity Policy might be breached in ways not specifically referred to here.

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5.6   The University will take steps to detect potential breaches of the Academic Integrity Policy which might not be immediately apparent when work is marked anonymously. Following completion of the marking process, once marks have been de-anonymised, the Module Leader might authorise a *viva voce*. The purpose of this will be to confirm the authenticity of the work that has been submitted.

5.7   Suspected breaches of the Academic Integrity Policy will be investigated in accordance with the procedure described in Section 10 of the Academic Regulations [Academic regulations | University of Westminster, London](#). Where a student is found to have committed a breach of this policy, a penalty will be applied in accordance with the Table of Penalties (see Section 10 Academic Regulations [Academic regulations | University of Westminster, London](#)).

5.8   Except in the case of poor scholarship, a breach of the Academic Integrity Policy can only be confirmed following the completion of the procedures detailed in Section 10 of the Academic Regulations [Academic regulations | University of Westminster, London](#).

5.9   If you require additional information about the University's Academic Integrity Policy or if you want to learn more about what it means for you, ask your Personal Tutor for help. Alternatively, you can email academicstandardsteam@westminster.ac.uk for more information.

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