

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY / CONTRACT CHEATING – GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS

Bournemouth University upholds values and principles in academic standards and regards any academic misconduct as a serious offence. BU has an obligation to ensure the awards it makes meet certain academic standards and BU students are responsible in ensuring their submitted work meets the academic expectations as required in the assessment brief.

It is an academic offence to use commissioning or contract cheating (i.e. buying or paying another person) to complete an assignment which is then submitted as your own work, or to extract work from 'essay banks' which is then submitted as your own work. Such activity impacts on the values of intellectual and personal honesty, trust and fairness and therefore any deliberate attempt to deceive will likely be judged as academic misconduct.

This brief outline highlights some of the key areas of BU's policies and procedures with regards to academic offences to guide you in your assessment, and to help ensure you do not unknowingly commit an academic offence.

What is an academic offence?

An academic offence may be defined as any attempt by a student to gain an unfair advantage in any assessment by deception or fraudulent means. Academic offences involving fraud may also fall within the scope of the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

The definition of an academic offence assumes dishonest intent (rather than a lack of competence on the part of a student; for example, the use of extensive quotations, even if references are cited).

An academic offence often includes:

- Plagiarism, which is where students represent another person's work as their own, or use another person's work without acknowledgement, or duplication ('self-plagiarism') where they use material that has already been submitted for assessment.
- Buying material or paying another person to complete an assignment, or using editors, translators or proof-readers who contribute significantly to the content.

Are all academic offences the same?

All academic offences are serious and they are determined based on the nature and severity of the offence, as either minor faculty offence, major faculty offence or University level offence (and can progress between these levels through the process).

The following factors will be taken into consideration when determining whether a suspected offence should be treated as minor, major or university level:

- The extent of the academic offence. For example, a piece of work which has 31% or more of unreferenced material within it will be regarded as a major academic offence, whereas limited failure to acknowledge sources or citation within a piece of work may be regarded as a minor academic offence. The relative contribution of the assessment to the overall student profile is not a relevant issue. For example, cheating will not be condoned simply because the weighting of the assessment is not significant in terms of the overall credits available.
- The extent of premeditated intention to deceive or otherwise gain advantage through deception or fraudulent means. For example, the evidence may suggest that the student has been sophisticated in their use of unattributed material, attempting to change minor aspects of plagiarised text to give the impression that it is their own work.
- Contract cheating is always deemed a University level offence, even if this is a student's first offence and the full range of penalties are available in this instance.

What are the Penalties?

Typical penalties that may be applied by an academic offences panel or board, depending on the severity of the offence, include:

- A written warning
- A requirement to resubmit work, re-sit an examination, repeat a unit or a level
- A mark of 0% or a capped mark for an assessment, unit or level
- Withdrawing a student from their course, in some cases without any credit.

Where can I find more information?

Resources for referencing, avoiding plagiarism, avoiding academic offenses and so forth can be found on our [Library webpages](#). The [BU Student Learning Guide](#), which is given to students who are found to have committed an academic offence or poor academic practice also has helpful information and SUBU advice can be used by students who have or are suspected of having committed an academic offence. Finally, the [Academic Offences Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards](#) also contains key information.

What happens if I am suspected of an Academic Offence?

If your Unit or Programme Leader have concerns about your work this will be considered as part of a preliminary investigation as described in the Academic Offences Policy and Procedure. Should the outcome be that you are suspected of an Academic Offence you will receive an email about this explaining what you will need to do next. Students are advised to contact SUBU Advice, who can offer support (email subuadvice@bournemouth.ac.uk, telephone **01202 965779**, website <http://www.subu.org.uk/advice>).