

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT



Contents

1. What is the Student Conduct Policy?	3
2. Who does the Policy apply to?	3
3. Academic Misconduct - what is it, and what is expected?	3
3.1 What is academic misconduct?	3
3.2 Expected conduct	4
3.3 Examples of misconduct	4
4. Why do we investigate misconduct?	5
5. How do we decide if academic misconduct has occurred?	5
6. Steps in the process	6
6.1 Early resolution	6
6.2 Phase 2 Investigation	6
6.3 Phase 3 Review Panel	7
6.4 Appeal	8
7. Who is involved in the process?	8
8. How do you report misconduct?	9
9. What should I do if I am accused of misconduct?	10
10. Support you can access	10
11. Frequently asked questions about the Policy	11
What Are the Potential Outcomes of This Process?	11
What Does the University Mean by Suspension or Exclusion?	11
What are the rules about the use of AI for assessments?	12

1. What is the Student Conduct Policy?

1.1 The Student Conduct Policy sets out what the University considers 'misconduct', how we investigate potential student misconduct under the policy, and the different steps of the process.

1.2 This guide is here to help you understand what academic misconduct is, how it is handled by the university, and how to maintain academic integrity. You should read this guide alongside the policy. The policy is available here:

<https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-261.pdf>

2. Who does the Policy apply to?

2.1 The Student Conduct Policy applies to all registered students (including those who may not actively be engaged in study, for example during a study break) and all applicants who have received a confirmed offer.

3. Academic Misconduct - what is it, and what is expected?

3.1 What is academic misconduct?

Academic misconduct refers to actions that give you or someone else an unfair advantage in assessments or compromise the fairness and integrity of academic work. Examples include:

- **Plagiarism:** Using someone else's work or ideas without proper citation.
- **Self-plagiarism:** Resubmitting your previous work without permission.
- **Copying:** taking a copy of someone else's work without their permission
- **Collusion:** Collaborating on assignments meant to be done individually.
- **Cheating in Exams:** Using unauthorized materials or devices during an exam.

- **Contract Cheating:** Paying someone to complete your work or using online essay services.
- **Falsifying Data:** Fabricating evidence or results for an assignment.
- **Impersonation:** Having someone else take an exam or complete work on your behalf.
- **Fraudulent claims:** submitting false claims or evidence in support of extenuating circumstances claims (this may also be behavioural misconduct)
- **Breaches of research and ethics policies** such as carrying out research without permission

3.2 Expected conduct

- **Be Honest and Transparent:** Ensure your work reflects your own effort and understanding. Properly cite the sources of your ideas and information.
- **Use Appropriate Research Methods:** Follow ethical and academic guidelines for research and data collection. Verify that your work is free of errors.
- **Develop Good Academic Practices:** Use university-provided tools, such as anti-plagiarism software, to check your work. Access support services to enhance your academic skills, including academic writing and referencing. Plan your work to avoid last-minute pressures.
- **Follow Examination Rules and referencing guidelines:** Adhere to all rules and guidelines for conducting yourself during exams, especially in time-constrained settings. Understand and follow referencing guidelines. Ensure you understand the rules for any group work assessments. Consult your tutors if unsure

3.3 Examples of misconduct

- Using text from other sources without proper attribution
- Using text from your own previously submitted work without permission
- Paying someone else to complete your work or to help with your work
- Bringing notes or other unauthorized aids to an exam
- Making up additional data because you could not recruit enough participants for your study
- Taking someone else's exam, or having them take your exam
- Providing a false medical letter to gain extra time for an assessment

- Using AI to complete your assessment without giving a clear indication of where it has been used.

Understanding what constitutes good conduct versus misconduct helps everyone avoid being subject to a misconduct investigation, and creates a positive and safe environment for the entire University community.

4. Why do we investigate misconduct?

4.1 Academic integrity ensures fairness, maintains the university's reputation, and reflects your honesty as a student. It's crucial for fostering a respectful and inclusive learning environment. By following the principles of academic integrity, you contribute to a fair and thriving academic community. By investigating reported misconduct, the University aims to ensure that assessments are fair for all students.

5. How do we decide if academic misconduct has occurred?

5.1 Under the University's Student Conduct Policy, the burden of proof is the "balance of probabilities". This means that following an investigation into misconduct, the University can decide whether it believes that something is more likely to have happened than not.

5.2 There is no expectation for reported misconduct to be proven beyond reasonable doubt (as happens in a criminal court) just that it is reasonable to believe, based on the information the University has, that the misconduct is more likely to have been carried out by the reported party than not.

6. Steps in the process

When a concern is raised we follow a clear and structured process to ensure fair and thorough handling of the situation. Here's an overview of the steps involved:

6.1 Early resolution

6.1.1 We believe many issues can be resolved quickly and informally at an early stage. Early Resolution is the first step for most misconduct cases, where we aim to address concerns through open communication and understanding.

6.1.2 The Early Resolution stage is supported locally, typically through the reported student's school. The indicative timeframe to complete the Early Resolution phase is between 5 to 10 working days.

6.1.3 Potential resolutions for a proven offence at this level include support and guidance to improve academic practices, warnings and reductions in marks.

6.2 Phase 2 Investigation

6.2.1 If Early Resolution is not possible, or the situation is more serious, the next step is an investigation. During this phase, an independent investigator will gather all relevant information and the reporting student has the opportunity to share their perspective. The investigation will be conducted fairly, with respect for everyone's rights.

6.2.2 The Investigation phase determines there is a case to be heard, and the Investigator decides if the matter is complex or serious enough to be referred to a formal escalation panel. If the Investigator believes the case can be concluded at this stage, they will decide, on the balance of probability, if misconduct was carried out

or not. If they decide misconduct has occurred they will also decide the most appropriate sanction.

6.2.3 Potential outcomes of cases decided at this stage include warnings and mandatory training, reductions in marks and support and guidance to improve academic practices.

6.2.4 The indicative timeframe to complete the Investigation phase is between 15 to 20 working days but this may be exceeded in some more complex cases.

6.3 Phase 3 Review Panel

6.3.1 For more complex or serious cases, the matter may be escalated to a Review Panel Hearing to decide what the outcome should be. The panel consists of independent University staff who will carefully review all the information from the investigation stage. The panel will then decide, on the balance of probability, if misconduct was carried out or not, as well as decide the most appropriate sanction.

6.3.2 Potential outcomes at this stage include a reduction of marks for entire modules or years of study, and permanent exclusion is a possibility in the most serious cases.

6.3.3 If a panel is required, the case will be assigned to a Student Casework Officer in the Academic Registry to coordinate the administration and communications. The Student Casework Officer will continue to support the case through to its completion and can provide advice on the process and the right to appeal.

6.3.4 The indicative timeframe to complete the Panel phase is between 25 to 40 working days.

6.4 Appeal

6.4.1 If you disagree with the outcome of your case, you have the right to appeal, no matter which stage of the policy was followed. Appeals are managed through the [Appeals Procedure](#).

6.4.2 You can submit an appeal for one of the following reasons:

- **Administrative Error:** If the university or assessment organization made a mistake or didn't follow proper procedures when making their decision, and you can provide evidence of this.
- **Personal Circumstances:** If personal issues prevented you from completing part of the process, and you had valid reasons for not disclosing these earlier.

6.4.3 At the end of your appeal, the University will provide you with a Completion of Procedures letter. This letter will enable you to make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) if you are still unhappy with the outcome. The OIA is an independent organization that provides a free and impartial service to review complaints from students about universities.

6.4.4 If your appeal doesn't meet these criteria, it may instead be treated as a [complaint](#).

7. Who is involved in the process?

7.1 The Reported Party:

This is the person who has been reported for potential misconduct.

7.2 The Casework Officer:

If a matter has been escalated to the Panel Stage, a central Casework Officer will be assigned to oversee the administration of the report from beginning to end. This

person helps coordinate each stage of the review process from the Investigation point onward.

7.3 Witness/es:

Witness/es may provide information after having witnessed the behaviour being reviewed. The witness/es may or may not also be an impacted party. Those who did not witness the behaviour being reviewed may not act as witnesses in an investigation.

7.4 The Investigator:

The Investigator is a member of staff appointed to investigate the alleged behaviour and determine if misconduct has occurred. The Investigator has not been involved in the case before the investigation stage.

7.5 The Escalation Panel:

The Escalation Panel is made up of a group of senior staff who will hear and make decisions on investigations. The Review Panel has not been involved in the case before the Panel Stage.

7.6 Supporters:

A supporter is anyone asked to support either the reporting or reported student. This may be a member of the University community who attends meetings with the student or helps them to understand the process and access support.

8. How do you report misconduct?

8.1 If you have witnessed academic misconduct taking place, you should report it to your Head of School who will assess whether there is evidence of a breach of the Student Conduct Policy and if so, arrange for action to be taken.

9. What should I do If I am accused of misconduct?

9.1 If you are suspected of misconduct, the following steps will ensure you understand the allegation, have a chance to have your say, and understand the outcome:

- **Notification:** You'll be informed in writing about the concerns and given the evidence.
- **Meeting:** You'll have an opportunity to explain your side and provide evidence.
- **Outcome:** You'll be informed of the decision and any actions to be taken.

9.2 students who are suspected of misconduct should try to:

- Respond promptly and honestly to any correspondence and in meetings
- Seek support from the Students' Union Advice Service or your personal tutor.
- Ask questions if there is anything you do not understand

10. Support you can access

10.1 Students at the University can access lots of support in following the rules of academic integrity, Personal Tutors can provide support, or students can access study skills support.

10.2 where students are suspected of engaging in academic misconduct, our goal is to create a balanced, respectful approach where students are supported and treated with care and dignity.

10.3 Our [Student Engagement Officers](#) (specific to your Faculty) and the **Student Life team** (studentlife@port.ac.uk) are available to provide practical and emotional support throughout the student conduct process and can refer and signpost you to other internal and external support services.

10.4 We recognise students may need specific support to be able to have a fair hearing due to aspects of their identity. We are committed to supporting all students to engage with the Student Conduct Policy and can signpost to additional sources of support where relevant to your individual needs.

10.5 We also recommend that students consider accessing independent advice and support from the [Students' Union Advice Service](#).

11. Frequently asked questions about the Policy

What Are the Potential Outcomes of This Process?

You can see examples of the potential outcomes in the [Steps of the Process](#) section above. The potential outcomes depend on the severity of the misconduct and the University handles all allegations in a proportionate manner. Allegations are only escalated to the next stage of the process if the outcomes available at that stage are inappropriate given all the circumstances of the case.

What Does the University Mean by Suspension or Exclusion?

Suspension is a temporary break in your studies. You will be suspended from all modules on your course, including assessments. While suspended you will not have access to any University resources such as the Library or your computer account. You will however have access to your University email account, and should regularly check for updates from the University.

Exclusion from the University permanently ends your studies with us and means that you are no longer a student at the University. You will no longer have access to any University resources such as the Library or your University email account.

What are the rules about the use of AI for assessments?

AI tools are permitted to assist your learning, as a tool to assist and inform research and generation of ideas, planning and output but their use must be transparent:

- Always cite when AI tools are used.
- Failing to acknowledge AI assistance may lead to misconduct charges.

Guidance for this can be found in the [use of AI statement](#).