The role of Unit Coordinators in supporting student development of academic integrity

Murdoch University holds academic integrity as one of its core values. Helping students to develop their academic, disciplinary and professional identity, share our values and understand the consequences of academic misconduct is of fundamental importance to the University. Murdoch, as a first principle of academic integrity, adopts a developmental approach to academic writing skills and literacies. We recognise students entering university for the first time, or after prolonged periods outside of a university context, bring with them a wide range of experiences and understandings and may need to update or develop appropriate academic integrity skills and acceptable academic behaviours.

To properly prepare and inform our students they are required to complete the Murdoch Academic Passport (MAP) online unit. This four-module unit has been specifically designed to raise students’ awareness of the conventions of academic writing and academic integrity. However, completion of MAP does not mean students will have fully developed their academic writing skills, nor their ability to conform to the conventions of academic writing especially in the first year. An appropriate level of understanding and skills takes time to develop and demonstrate.
Unit Coordinators (UCs) play an important role in assisting students to develop the skills and attitudes for academic writing and academic integrity. Preventing all academic misconduct is probably impossible, but there is much UCs can do to reduce the likelihood of it occurring in their units. Strategies to minimise plagiarism in assessment include:

- Teaching students about the conventions of academic authorship and writing in generic and disciplinarily specific contexts
- Assessment task design that reduces opportunities for plagiarism
- Being familiar with online resources commonly used by students such as Freelancer and Gum Tree, sentence generators and content rewriters (e.g., http://www.csgenerator.com/)
- Clarifying expectations to students and reinforcing these as appropriate (adapted from CSHE1)

UCs play a major role in supporting students’ academic skills development, detecting academic misconduct, and ensuring students are aware of the importance of these matters. This assists in achieving better outcomes for students, as well as, maintaining Murdoch’s academic standards, quality and reputation.

UCs are the first critical staff in detecting academic misconduct and in determining whether an allegation of academic misconduct should be escalated to an Academic Misconduct Investigator for investigation. The UC is, therefore, pivotal in ensuring the Student Discipline Regulations2 and Procedures3 (see the links below) are properly implemented within their School and the University.

UCs may decide that where plagiarism appears to be present it is actually an assessment issue best addressed through appropriate feedback and guidance on the conventions of academic writing, standards and expectations (see p. 5). Alternatively, the UC may determine that an allegation requires further investigation and escalate it to the School’s Academic Misconduct Investigator under the procedures outlined in this booklet. The UC should be sufficiently concerned but does not have to be absolutely sure that a student has committed misconduct to decide to escalate the matter to the Academic Misconduct Investigator. Whether the student has committed misconduct or not, is determined through the investigation process. If the UC is not able to make a determination they should consult the School Academic Misconduct Investigator for assistance. The student may also at any time be directed to contact the Centre for University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) for further assistance with their writing.

Every School has a member of staff appointed as an Academic Misconduct Investigator who can assist with any issue related to academic misconduct. Academic Policy Coordinators provide administrative support throughout the process. A list of Investigators and Arbiters is available as an attachment to the Student Discipline Procedure in the Policy and Procedure Manager (PPM) system. Further supporting information is also available on the Educational Development website, located at: http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Educational-Development/Academic-misconduct/.

The University recognises the important and critical role played by the Unit Coordinator in assuring our students develop sound academic writing and literacy skills and academic integrity. This guide has been developed to help you in the decision making process.

Key People in the process

- Unit Coordinator
- Academic Policy Coordinator
- Academic Misconduct Investigator
- Arbiter

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This guide is intended to be used as a reference point, and aid to determine a. if an investigation is needed, and b. an appropriate course of action following your decision when considering allegations of academic misconduct.

According to the Murdoch University Student Discipline Regulations and Procedures, it is the responsibility of Unit Coordinators to determine if an allegation of academic misconduct is reasonable and then to determine the appropriate course of action.

**Student Discipline Procedure (accessible through the PPM)**

2.1 The Unit Coordinator must decide whether the allegation is a matter to be dealt with as Academic Misconduct, or is simply an assessment issue.

**Student Discipline Regulations**

2.1 “Academic Misconduct” means any form of academic dishonesty relating to a Unit, whether in an undergraduate, postgraduate or honours course, and includes, but is not limited to:

2.1.1 cheating in relation to assessment;
2.1.2 plagiarism;
2.1.3 submission of the same, or substantially the same, completed assessment in a different Unit;
2.1.4 failure to comply with rules for a particular assessment (for example, what material can be brought into an examination room);
2.1.5 collusion;
2.1.6 purloining or misappropriation (copying the work of another without his or her knowledge);
2.1.7 ghostwriting (submitting the work of another person as your own); and
2.1.8 fabricating, falsifying or misstating results as part of an assessment, and also includes any attempts to commit any form of academic dishonesty listed above.

**First Year Unit Coordinators please note:**

In the vast majority of instances new students come to University unaware of the expectations, standards and conventions of academic writing and integrity. An overly severe reaction to what might be the result of poorly developed understandings and skills may adversely affect a student’s confidence to continue with their studies.

**Turnitin**

Turnitin is widely used across Murdoch University as a writing development tool and as a means of detecting plagiarism. When used to detect plagiarism it is important to understand the limitations of Turnitin to make intelligent judgments.

**Please note:** Turnitin originality reports and percentiles are not absolute indicators of plagiarism and discretion needs to be used when using Turnitin originality reports to determine if plagiarism has occurred. Access Turnitin Academy Live webinars and training at: http:// turnitin.com/en_us/training/professional-development
Determining if an investigation is necessary

As Unit Coordinator

Your first decision is to decide if the allegation constitutes academic misconduct, or if it is actually an assessment issue resulting from factors such as, a student’s inexperience with the conventions of academic writing, poorly developed academic writing skills or limited understanding and knowledge of academic standards, expectations and conventions. With allegations of cheating, ghost writing, collusion, purloining and submission of the same, or substantially the same, completed assessment in more than one unit (in other words, recycling the assessment) such determinations are generally fairly evident.

However, with plagiarism, especially in the first year, it is important to consider if the issue is really one of poor academic writing skill development, as opposed to a firm intention to cheat.

Your second decision is to determine what course of action is appropriate if it is determined that there has been:

a) No academic misconduct

or

b) An investigation is needed

Instructions

To assist you when considering an allegation of academic misconduct each of the following have equal merit and all factors must be considered as part of the decision making process. This is not necessarily a linear process. Each factor, listed below, must be considered in reaching a decision as outlined on the diagram on pages 6 and 7.

- The form and extent of the alleged academic misconduct
- The likely cause and intent - unintentional or Intentional
- The student’s level of experience
Determine the form of academic misconduct

If

- Cheating in assessment
  SDR 2.1.1
- Submission of the same, or substantially the same, completed assessment in a different Unit
  SDR 2.1.3
- Failure to comply with the rules of assessment
  SDR 2.1.4
- Collusion
  SDR 2.1.5
- Purloining /misappropriation
  SDR 2.1.6
- Ghost Writing
  SDR 2.1.7
- Falsifying/Fabricating
  SDR 2.1.8

Escalate

Must be escalated to Academic Investigator
Complete Template 2
Contact the Academic Policy Coordinator for template letters

SDR = Student Discipline Regulations

or

Plagiarism suspected

✔ Tick the level that best matches the degree and scope of the plagiarized material

- Minor
- Moderate
- Extensive

No investigation
Complete Template 3 and contact student in writing
Incident recorded on Callista - cc correspondence to s.processing@murdoch.edu.au
Unit Coordinator provides feedback and guidance to student

Investigation warranted
Orange Folder opened and allegation escalated to School Academic Misconduct Investigator (Contact Academic Policy Coordinator for Template 2)

Form of plagiarism
- Copied material without appropriate quotation marks
- Non-attributed material known to be taken from an identifiable source
- Poorly/inadequately paraphrased and incorrectly referenced material
- Fabricated sources
- Material identified by Turnitin that has not been appropriately referenced
- Ideas and or information used and presented as the student’s own without appropriate attribution to source

NOTE: If you are unsure about procedures contact your School Academic Misconduct Investigator
Factors to consider when determining the seriousness of Academic Misconduct

✅ Tick the appropriate boxes. If any ticks are in the orange boxes the allegation must be escalated to the School Academic Investigator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form and extent of misconduct</th>
<th>How serious is the academic misconduct?</th>
<th>If it is determined that an allegation is academic misconduct it must be escalated to the Academic Misconduct Investigator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plagiarism - Minor</td>
<td>Plagiarism - Moderate + Recycling Collusion Falsifying/Fabrication Purloining Ghost writing etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s level of experience</th>
<th>Student in their 1st teaching period at Murdoch</th>
<th>Student in 2nd or subsequent teaching period at Murdoch OR Student’s level of experience is such that they would normally be expected to fully understand and comply with the conventions of academic writing, e.g. have completed a postgraduate coursework degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check Callista for prior allegations and outcomes</th>
<th>No record of previous allegation or outcome</th>
<th>One previously recorded note on Callista Two + previously recorded notes on Callista</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likely cause of the allegation is</th>
<th>Due to student’s inexperience and likely unintentional</th>
<th>Intentional and experience not a factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Requires investigation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minor Academic misconduct?  
Requires investigation

Unit Coordinator treats the allegation as an assessment/development issue. 
Student is provided with feedback and guidance. 
Advise student to make a consultation with a CUTL academic.

Unit Coordinator notifies student in writing via Template 3 
Student is provided with feedback and guidance. 
Advise student to make a consultation with a CUTL academic. 
Ensures a note of incident recorded on Callista.

Escalate contact Academic Policy Coordinator for Template 2 and complete.

Common errors students make in assessment tasks likely to be a result of poorly developed writing skills or understanding of the conventions of academic writing:

- Omission of quotation marks
- Omitted references
- Inappropriate paraphrasing
- Mistakes with citations
- Reference list omitted or incorrectly formatted
- Errors with Styles and conventions e.g. APA, Chicago, IEEE
Communication Flowchart: Academic Misconduct

Initial Review

Allegation of **Academic Misconduct** made by/or to the Unit Coordinator (Reg. 6.2).

Unit Coordinator analyses alleged misconduct using criteria in the **Guide** to determine if an academic misconduct investigation is needed, and determines which of the following three available courses of action to take (the Unit Coordinator must decide whether or not to refer an allegation to an Academic Misconduct Investigator within 10 business days):

1. An investigation of Academic Misconduct is warranted. The Unit Coordinator must escalate the misconduct to the School-based Investigator. (Template 2). (Reg. 10). Unit Coordinator requests the School’s Academic Policy Coordinator to open an orange misconduct file. Unit Coordinator records NA for assessment item pending outcome of investigation.

2. No investigation is warranted. The misconduct is minor and the student has no previous record of misconduct. The Unit Coordinator must advise the student in writing (Template 3). (Reg. 8-9). Student recommended to contact the Unit Coordinator for guidance and directed to information on referencing/citing on the web. cc correspondence to s.processing@murdoch.edu.au to ensure a note is placed on the student record. *(If the student disputes the alleged minor misconduct, the misconduct must be reported to the Investigator).* (Template 2).

3. No misconduct has occurred and no action is to be taken.

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**Students should be directed to contact the Student Assist Team at the Student Guild for help and advice regarding the student discipline process.**

Investigation

The Investigator analyses alleged misconduct and uses **Penalty Range Framework** to determine which of three available courses of action to take:

1. An investigation is warranted. Within 5 business days of receiving the allegation the Investigator must send a written notice to the student advising that the allegation is being investigated. The student may be requested to attend an interview at this point. (Template 5a for Academic Misconduct and 5b for General Misconduct). (Reg. 13). Or the student is advised that an investigation has been completed (not required to attend an interview at this time). (Template 5c for Academic Misconduct).

2. No investigation warranted as there is insufficient evidence to support the allegation. In this case the investigation will be deemed to have been completed.

3. No misconduct has occurred and the allegation is dismissed. Investigator must advise student in writing (Template 6a for Academic Misconduct, Template 6b for General Misconduct).
At the conclusion of the Investigation the Investigator must prepare a report detailing the findings (Template 7):

(i) if the matter is either general or serious academic misconduct, the Investigator must refer the case to the School’s Arbiter (Template 7). (Reg. 16);

or

(ii) if the Academic Misconduct is not serious enough to be sent to the Arbiter, the Investigator may act as Arbiter.

Allegation Notice/Arbiter

Allegation is considered by the School Arbiter. Upon determination and receipt of final outcome, Unit Coordinator finalises grade.
Complete this template (3)
when Minor Academic Misconduct (plagiarism)

Date

Full Name of Student

Full Address of Student

City < State > < Postcode >

Email Address of Student

Dear < >

Student Number < > – Student Discipline Regulations, Initial Review of Academic Misconduct

I am the Unit Coordinator for < > and I am writing to you about your <Assignment, Lab, etc.> submitted on < > in teaching period < >, < >. When your work was marked concerns were raised about plagiarism.

After reviewing your work, I have decided that you have plagiarised, which I am treating as minor academic misconduct under the Student Discipline Regulations as indicated on your <Assignment, Lab, etc.> and that no further investigation is warranted. As a result, the following note will be placed on your confidential student record:

"Assessed as minor misconduct without investigation. No penalty required but student advised to visit the Student Life and Learning website”.

This note is held on the student system only and will not appear on your academic transcript. If you disagree with this decision, you may dispute this formally by responding in writing to me within the next 14 days. This matter will then be referred to your School’s Academic Investigator.

To avoid a repeat of this situation I recommend that you contact me to receive feedback and guidance on the conventions of academic writing. I also recommend that you visit the Student Life and Learning website http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Student-life/Study-successfully/. In particular, I would like to draw your attention to the Referencing and Citing page, which can assist with your academic skills and referencing and citing. You can access this here: http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Student-life/Study-successfully/Referencing-and-citing/. Another useful website to visit is Plagiarism.org for detailed information on academic integrity, plagiarism and how to avoid it http://www.plagiarism.org/.

Visiting these sites and reading the information will help you better understand Academic Integrity and avoid misconduct in the future. The integrity of the assessment process and the value of degrees awarded to graduates depend upon ensuring that no dishonesty is permitted. I would point out that any further misconduct will be treated more seriously and dealt with by the School’s Academic Investigator and under the Student Discipline Regulations you may face more severe penalties.

To discuss this matter further, please contact me via telephone on (08) 9360 < > or email < > as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

< >

Unit Coordinator

cc: Unit Coordinator

cc: Academic Policy Coordinator
s.processing@murdoch.edu.au
results@murdoch.edu.au
Complete this Template (2) when you suspect academic misconduct and escalate to the School Academic Investigator

Internal Memorandum
To: < > Of: < >
From: < > Our ref: < >
Date: < > No. of pages: 1 of < >
Subject: Student Number < > – Student Discipline Regulations, Initial Review of Academic Misconduct

It is alleged that < > has committed Academic Misconduct under section < > of the Student Discipline Regulations. It is alleged that < > committed misconduct by:
(Unit Coordinator to choose/delete relevant item/s from Clause 2.1 of the Student Discipline Regulations)

| 2.1.1 | cheating in relation to assessment |
| 2.1.2 | plagiarism |
| 2.1.3 | submission of the same, or substantially the same, completed assessment in a different Unit |
| 2.1.4 | failure to comply with rules for a particular assessment (for example, what material can be brought into an examination room) |
| 2.1.5 | collusion |
| 2.1.6 | purloining or misappropriation (copying the work of another without his or her knowledge) |
| 2.1.7 | ghostwriting (submitting the work of another person as your own) |
| 2.1.8 | fabricating, falsifying or misstating results as part of an assessment |

I consider that an investigation into this allegation of Academic Misconduct is warranted as (I do not consider that the alleged Academic Misconduct is minor) and/or (the student has a record of previous Academic Misconduct).

(OR)
On < > I notified < > that I had decided to take no action in this case because I considered that the alleged Academic Misconduct was minor and the student had no record of any previous Academic Misconduct. However, < > has disputed the alleged Academic Misconduct. A copy of the student response is attached.

In accordance with Regulation 9 of the Student Discipline Regulations, the misconduct is now referred to you, as the person authorised by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), for investigation.

| Student Name: | < > |
| Student Number: | < > |
| Enrolment Status: | Commonwealth Supported Student |
| Title of Course Enrolled In: | < > |
| Unit Code and Title: | < > |
| Commenced: | Teaching Period < >, Year < > |
| Advanced Standing: | No |
| Transcript Attached: | Yes |
| Alleged Offence: | <Provide a brief outline of the alleged facts> |
| Date of Alleged Offence: | Teaching Period < >, Year < > |
| Misconduct Category: | <Please refer to the Framework to Determine Degree of Academic Misconduct available at: http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Educational-Development/Academic-misconduct> |
| Assignment Attached: | Yes |
| Original Source Document Attached: | Yes |
| Turnitin Originality Report Attached: | Yes |
| Exonerating Factors: | < > |
| Aggravating Factors: | < > |

Yours sincerely
< >
Unit Coordinator

cc: School Dean
Academic Policy Coordinator