

Academic dishonesty – frequently asked questions

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Q. Are academic dishonesty and plagiarism the same thing?

A. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism means using someone else's words or ideas in your submitted assessment without proper acknowledgement.

Q. Do I have to do the online Academic Honesty Education Module (AHM)?

A. Yes. At the University of Sydney successful completion of the AHM is mandatory for new students. If you don't complete the module before the deadline you may not be able to access your academic results.

Q. Why is it considered dishonest if I reuse a previously submitted assignment that I wrote, in another assessment task?

A. Reusing or 'recycling' a previously submitted assignment (or parts of that assignment) is a form of academic dishonesty because a new assessment task requires you to do new or original work. In a few cases you may be permitted to reuse previously submitted work but you need your unit coordinator's written permission.

Q. I received a notification of possible academic dishonesty. Can I contact my unit coordinator and explain my actions?

A. No. Your unit coordinator is not the decision-maker in resolving an allegation of academic dishonesty, so they are not able to influence the decision or withdraw the allegation.

Q. What things should I include in my response?

A. You may respond in person or in writing. We recommend that you be honest and open with the faculty. For example, if you made honest mistakes with referencing you should admit this and explain the reasons for the errors.

Q. Is it better for me to attend an interview or to submit a written response?

A. Some people prefer having the time to construct a considered written response and not having to deal with the stress of a real-time interview with the Education Integrity Coordinator (EIC). Others prefer a face-to-face meeting because they want the possibility of explaining some part of their response that a written response cannot do. If you have any kind of support documentation to support your response, we recommend you present it to the faculty. Whichever type of response you choose, be aware that a written response will always have a shorter deadline. You can [request assistance from SUPRA](#) with both types of responses.

Q. I received a notification of possible academic dishonesty but I am currently overseas. Should I return to Sydney for the meeting?

A. If you are overseas and prefer a face-to-face meeting you can request another meeting date, or a Zoom meeting. It will be up to the faculty to approve.

Q. I received a notification of possible academic dishonesty but my faculty did not send me a marked-up copy of the assessment. Can I ask for this?

A. Yes. This document will show you the parts of the submitted work that the faculty is investigating and will help you to properly structure your response.

Q. What types of questions will they ask me at the interview?

A. The EIC will want to properly understand if there has been a breach of the University's Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy or not. The usual initial questions will be something like, 'Do you understand the allegation?' followed by 'Tell me what you think happened'. If your response is not clear they will ask further questions to help them understand your explanation and decide whether you have breached the policy.

Q. Can I ask for more time for my response?

A. Yes.

Q. Will a decision be made at the interview?

A. In many cases a decision is made at the end of the interview and you will be provided with an outcome letter which should also inform you of your right to appeal and the deadline. In some faculties where a decision is made at the interview you may be asked to sign the decision letter to acknowledge that you have received it. Signing does not mean you agree with the outcome or penalty. You will be provided with a copy to take with you. A formal outcome letter will be emailed to you. If the EIC requires more time to make a decision they will inform you at the end of the meeting.

Q. What can I do if I don't agree with the outcome and/or penalty?

A. You have a right to appeal the outcome or the penalty. [Read our article on academic appeals.](#)

Q. Will a finding of academic dishonesty or plagiarism appear in my academic transcript or be shown to future employers?

A. No. However, students in certain degrees should be aware that being admitted to practice in some professions will ask you to disclose any previous integrity breaches, which may include academic dishonesty matters. The University will not disclose this information.

Q. What are the possible outcomes and penalties?

A. [Read our article on academic dishonesty and plagiarism.](#)

Q. If I admit to the allegation will the outcome and penalty be more lenient?

A. If, after reflecting on the allegation and the evidence, you conclude you have engaged in academic dishonesty or plagiarism, even if you did not intend to do so, we recommend you accept the allegation and provide your explanation. The outcome and penalty should be consistent with the University's [Educational Integrity Decision-Making and Penalty Guidelines 2018](#).

Q. If the matter is sent to the Registrar (Student Affairs Unit) to be investigated under the academic misconduct rules, how long will this process take?

A. Any matter that is escalated beyond the faculty level will take longer to resolve. The Registrar has up to 10 days to consider the matter before deciding to either proceed to investigation; send back to the faculty to resolve under the academic honesty policy; issue a warning; or do nothing. If the matter is considered possible misconduct it will proceed to investigation and the process will likely take at least several weeks.

Q. Will the misconduct investigation impact my study visa and graduation?

A. If you are required to respond to an allegation of possible misconduct you will not be able to graduate until the matter is resolved. This is because if the outcome is misconduct, a penalty could be a fail grade, or other similar penalty requiring you to re-do a unit of study in your degree. You may appeal the outcome and penalty but an appeal will take at least several weeks to resolve. If you receive a notification of possible misconduct after completion of your degree, and even after receiving a

letter of completion or invitation to your graduation ceremony, we recommend you [contact us](#) for assistance. It is likely that you need to apply for a new visa, especially if you deny the allegation. SUPRA has Registered Migration agents who can assist you with this.

Q. If I accept the allegation of academic misconduct at the preliminary interview, rather than going through to investigation, will the penalty be more lenient?

A. Accepting the allegation means also accepting the likely penalty or range of penalties set out in the notification. In this case the penalty is likely to be one of the more lenient ones in the range but may also depend on the circumstances and type of misconduct. We recommend you [contact us](#) for assistance.

Q. Can the faculty still investigate me for possible academic dishonesty in an assessment I submitted and passed last semester?

A. Yes. The faculty or university can investigate any previous assessment you submitted for grading, including group work assessments.

Q. What supporting documentation is useful to submit as evidence to prove that I did the work independently?

A. The key types of evidence that support your claim to have completed the assessment on your own include: your drafts leading up to the final submission; notes written about source materials and various readings that show your original thinking about the subject; and your plan to use the material in your assignment.

Q. Why is it considered dishonest if my friend and I work together but write and submit our own assignments?

A. At the University, an individual assessment means you are expected to formulate and write the assignment on your own. Your submitted assignment must contain ideas and wording that are original to you, or correctly referenced, otherwise Turnitin will pick up on a high level of similarity, and you and your friend may receive an allegation notification. Only a group work assignment allows you to share ideas and write collaboratively with other students.

Q. My group members and I received a notification of possible academic dishonesty in our submitted group assignment. I didn't do anything wrong so do I have to respond?

A. Yes. Failure to respond to an allegation may result in a finding against you because you decided to not provide your side of the story. The faculty must consider each group member's response separately. [Contact us](#) for assistance.

Q. Is my sister allowed to check my assignment before I submit it?

A. Yes. However, anyone who checks your assignment must only correct grammar and provide general feedback on the structure of the written work – such as identifying referencing errors, or lack of clarity in answering the question.

Q. Can SUPRA write my response for me?

A. No. SUPRA caseworkers can assist you in understanding the allegation, advising on support documents, and reviewing your written response.

Q. I am very anxious about this notification. Do I need a lawyer?

A. No. [Contact us](#) for assistance. Our caseworkers have deep experience and knowledge of the University's policies and procedures, and our service is free to students.

Q. I did not engage in academic dishonesty, but should I accept the allegation to avoid the investigation and risk not graduating on time/impact on visa and job opportunities already lined up?

A. In this situation we strongly recommend that you [contact us](#) for assistance before responding to the allegation.