

Academic integrity breaches: frequently asked questions

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General questions

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. In most cases plagiarism will be considered a minor breach if it is evident the plagiarism was unintentional.

Academic dishonesty could include recycling, deliberately plagiarising, collusion and exam misconduct. Academic dishonesty is evident when a student was trying to gain an academic advantage. All cases of academic dishonesty of this sort will be considered a major breach.

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

A. Yes. At the University of Sydney successful completion of the [AHEM](#) 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 an academic integrity breach if I reuse a previously submitted assignment that I wrote in another assessment task?

A. Resubmitting or 'recycling' previously submitted work is an academic integrity breach because a new assessment task requires you to do new, original work. This is true whether

you reuse the whole assessment or only parts of that assessment. You may sometimes be permitted to reuse previously submitted work, **but don't do this without your unit coordinator's written permission.**

Q. Can I use Grammarly, Google Translate, or any other software (including automated writing tools) to check my assignment?

A. Only if the unit of study outline expressly permits it. You must state on the front of the assignment (or in a footnote or reference) the name of the software and a brief description of how you used it, including whether it was used for editing or proofreading.

Q. Is it an academic integrity breach if I use AI for an assessment?

A. Some unit coordinators permit the use of AI. Make sure your unit of study outline permits its use, or ask your unit coordinator. You must acknowledge the use of AI or else you may receive an allegation of a breach of academic integrity.

Q. Why is it a breach of academic integrity rules if my friend and I work together but write and submit our own assessments?

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

Q. Is a friend or family member allowed to check my assessment before I submit it?

A. Only if the Unit of Study Outline expressly permits it. 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. Under the [Academic Integrity Policy 2022 \(Section 16\)](#), any person who provides you with assistance must be acknowledged at the front of your work or in a written reference. You must state the name of the person, a description of the nature of the

assistance, and, if it is related to the topic of the assessment, their current or former area of academic specialisation.

Q. Do I always need to reference text I found on a non-English-language website?

A. Yes. Any content in your essay that is not your original idea and written by you must be referenced. Even if you translated and paraphrased the content, you still need to reference the source. This includes content from anywhere on the internet, in any language, and in any form. If you are not sure how to correctly reference this content, contact your unit coordinator or register for an [individual consultation with the Learning Hub](#).

Q. What are the possible outcomes and penalties for an academic integrity breach?

A. While the possible outcomes and penalties vary from case to case, the University's [Academic Integrity Decision-Making and Penalty Guidelines 2023](#) is the policy that guides these decisions. Read more on outcomes and penalties for [academic integrity breaches](#).

Q. What can I do if I don't agree with the outcome or penalty for an academic integrity breach?

A. You have a right to appeal the outcome or the penalty. Find out more about [making an academic appeal](#).

Q. Will an academic integrity breach appear in my academic transcript or be shown to future employers?

A. No. However, applying to practice in some professions will require you to disclose any previous integrity breaches, which may include major academic integrity breaches or misconduct. The University will not disclose this information. If your breach allegation is referred to the Registrar (Student Affairs Unit) to be investigated for academic misconduct, some penalties may be shown on your transcript. You should [contact us](#) for advice.

Q. Can the faculty still investigate me for a possible academic integrity breach 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. I am very anxious about an academic integrity breach allegation. 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.

Major breaches

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

A. No. If you receive a major breach allegation from your faculty's Educational Integrity Coordinator (EIC), the notice will include instructions on how to respond. Your unit coordinator is not the decision maker, and they are not able to influence the decision or withdraw the allegation.

Q. What things should I include in my response to a major breach allegation?

A. You have 7 days to submit your written response through the student dashboard, or you can request a meeting. We recommend that you be honest with the faculty. For example, if you made honest mistakes with referencing you should admit this and explain the reasons for the errors.

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 could support your claim 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. When responding to a possible major breach, is it better for me to attend an interview or to submit a written response?

A. When you receive your allegation notice you will be instructed to respond in writing or attend a meeting. If you have been instructed to respond in writing, you can request to

attend a meeting. Some students prefer having the time to construct a considered written response and not have to deal with the stress of a real-time interview with the EIC. Others prefer a meeting because they feel they can explain the situation better verbally. If you have any kind of documentation to support your response, we recommend you present it to the faculty. You can [request assistance from SUPRA](#) with both types of responses.

Q. I received a notification of a possible major breach, 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. I need to respond to an alleged major breach via interview, what types of questions will they ask me at the interview?

A. If you decide to attend the interview or have been requested to attend an interview, the EIC will want to properly understand if there has been a breach of the University's Academic Integrity 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. Will a decision be made at the interview?

A. Usually a decision is made after the interview. You will also be provided with an outcome letter via your student dashboard, which should also inform you of your right to appeal and the deadline.

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

A. Yes – you should follow the instructions in your student dashboard account to request an extension.

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. 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 breached academic integrity requirements, even if you did not intend to do so, we recommend you accept the allegation and provide your explanation. The EIC will take into account your honesty and previous academic behaviour. The outcome and penalty should be consistent with the University's [Academic Integrity Decision-Making and Penalty Guidelines 2023](#).

Q. I don't want to risk not graduating on time, impacts on my visa and any job opportunities I already have lined up. I did not breach the academic integrity rules, but should I accept the allegation to avoid the investigation?

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

Q. My group members and I received a notification of a possible academic integrity breach for a group work assessment. 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.

Misconduct allegations

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 potential breach that is escalated to the Registrar will take longer to resolve. The Registrar has up to 10 days to consider the allegation before deciding to either proceed to investigation; send back to the faculty to resolve under the academic integrity 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 a 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 it is resolved**. This is because penalties for misconduct include a fail grade, or similar, requiring you to retake a unit of study in your degree. You can appeal the outcome and penalty but an appeal will take a minimum of many weeks to resolve. If you receive a notification of possible misconduct after you've completed your degree, we recommend you [contact us](#) for assistance. International students will most likely need to apply for a new visa, especially if you deny the allegation. SUPRA Legal Service 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.

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