

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO

# ACADEMIC OFFENCES

## GET IN TOUCH

**0121 204 4848**

[advice@aston.ac.uk](mailto:advice@aston.ac.uk)

10:00am - 4:00pm

### **DROP IN**

10:30am - 12:30pm on the following days:

Tuesdays & Thursdays

No appointment needed for drop-ins

### **LOCATION**

Ground floor of Students' Union building



# ACADEMIC OFFENCES



An academic offence occurs when a student gains an unfair advantage by not following or breaching Academic Regulations during any part of the assessment process whether intentionally or not.

## WHAT ARE ACADEMIC OFFENCES?

Actions that might provide an unfair advantage in assessments, whether intentional or unintentional.

- **Plagiarism:** Using the work and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement, whether intentional or unintentional.
- **Collusion:** Collaborating with other students without permission to submit individual work.
- **Cheating:** Any misconduct giving an unfair advantage, including copying from others or using unauthorised materials during exams.
- **Commissioning** or Purchasing work: Paying someone else to complete assignments or exams.
- **Unauthorised or inappropriate use of AI** (artificial intelligence) to generate all or part of an assessment submission
- **Falsification of data:** Altering or fabricating research data or results.
- **Impersonation:** Allowing someone to impersonate you for assessment attendance.
- **Unauthorised Materials:** Bringing unauthorised materials into exams, such as notes, textbooks, or electronic devices.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I'M SUSPECTED OF COMMITTING AN ACADEMIC OFFENCE?

1. Any marks/grades relating to an assessment will be withheld by the School until the matter is resolved.
2. You'll usually be invited to an initial meeting or a two-stage hearing to discuss the situation.
3. At this meeting, the School will give you the opportunity to address concerns and mention any relevant mitigating circumstances.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- a) **Review the information:** Carefully examine any reports or information you've received.
- b) **Write a draft statement:** Prepare a draft statement to respond to the allegations
- c) **Attend the meeting:** If invited to a meeting, you should attend to understand the concerns. You also have the chance to discuss what happened.

## WHAT IF THE SCHOOL DECIDES AN OFFENCE HAS OCCURRED

If the school determines an offence has occurred and can handle it locally, you have several options:

- **Admission:** Admit the charge and accept the School's penalty, such as mark deductions.
- **Denial:** Deny the charge, leading to a referral to the University Academic Misconduct Board.
- **Request for more time:** If unsure about admitting or denying the charge, request additional time to seek advice.

## MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

If you admit the offence and the School decides they can deal with it, you can ask them to consider any relevant mitigating circumstances that may have affected you at the time.

## POTENTIAL PENALTIES

Penalties vary based on severity and may include mark deductions, grade reduction, or zero marks.

## REFERRAL TO AN ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT BOARD

Your case may be referred to an Academic Misconduct Board for further consideration based on the offence's severity or other circumstances outlined in the Regulations on Student Discipline.

## WE CAN HELP...

Please visit: [astonsu.com/support](https://astonsu.com/support)

EXPLAIN PROCESSES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS. PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT ON CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST YOU. HELP DETERMINE YOUR NEXT STEPS WITH THE PROCESS AND MORE.



## THE ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT BOARD HEARING PROCESS

### Pre-Hearing Preparation:

- **Hearing Invitation:** Students receive a written notice at least 10 working days before the hearing, detailing the charge, rights to representation, and hearing details (usually sent by email to the student's university email address).
- **Response:** Students should respond in writing at least five days before the hearing. They can choose to admit, deny, or challenge the charge. They can also ask to be supported by a friend and/or represented by someone.
- **Documentation:** Relevant documents, and any evidence including that submitted by the student, are provided to the student at least five days before the hearing.

### The Hearing:

**Board Composition:** The board typically includes:

- The Chair, a member of the Academic Staff, appointed by the Senate.
- Three members of the Academic Staff, nominated by the Colleges

### Presentation of The Case:

#### *If Admitting the Charge:*

- The hearing begins with introductions, and the student can present mitigating circumstances before the penalty is determined.

#### *If Denying the Charge:*

1. The University Presenter presents the case against the student.
2. The Student then presents their defence/response.
3. Both parties may be asked questioned and asked for final comments before a decision is made.

## THE DECISION & PENALTY

### The Decision and Penalty Determination

- **Finding of charge:** If you deny the charge and the Board finds the charge unproven, the case will be dismissed.
- **Mitigating Factors:** If the charge is proven or admitted, you can present mitigating circumstances before the penalty is determined.
- **Consideration of Factors:** The Board considers the severity of the offence and any mitigating or aggravating factors before determining the penalty.
- **Range of Penalties:** Penalties range from warnings to expulsion, depending on the offence's severity and other relevant factors.
- **Outcome Notification:** The student will be informed of the outcome on the day of the hearing or in writing within 7 days.

## RIGHT TO APPEAL

- You have the right to appeal the decision\* or penalty within 10 days of being notified. If you don't appeal within this time, the penalty stands.
- \*If you admitted the charge during the proceedings, you can only appeal the penalty imposed, not the finding of guilt.

## AVOIDING ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

- Understand you are responsible for the academic integrity of the work you submit.
- It's your responsibility to read the University's academic regulations and course-related guidance for your assessments, including referencing requirements.
- **LDC in the library:** For support and resources on improving academic skills, contact the Learning Development Centre. Email: [ldc@aston.ac.uk](mailto:ldc@aston.ac.uk). Tel: 0121 204 3040