

A'Sharqiyah University Policy

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Policy name	Academic Integrity Policy		
Policy number	AC0009		
Contact Person	Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research		
Approval Authority	Board of Trustees		
Date first approved	29 March 2016	Last substantive review	18 April 2022
Policy Review Cycle	One year	Next review	April 2023

1. Definitions

Terms / Abbreviations	Definition
ASU	A'Sharqiyah University
DVCAAR	Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research
Plagiarism	An act of academic cheating that involves producing or reproducing other people's original work by individuals and passing it as their own work (Pecorari, 2013).
Collusion	An act that involves two or more students conspiring together to deceive ASU by producing assessed work that is copied from one or more students.
Cheating	Cheating during exams by bringing unauthorized material or copying from other students or facilitating the copying of one's work by other students.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to uphold academic integrity at ASU. The policy sets out procedures for preventing, detecting and addressing all forms of academic misconduct by students and staff. The policy also seeks to instill an organizational culture of academic integrity among its students and staff.

Within a disciplinary setting, this policy aims to enable University staff and students to take a proactive approach away from detecting and punishing academic misconduct to prevention through good academic practices.

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3. Scope

This policy provides guidelines and processes aimed at preventing and dealing with cases of plagiarism, collusion and all forms of cheating by students.

The policy also applies to academic staff in relation to all materials used in teaching and research. Teaching and non-teaching staff are also covered in relation to policy papers and all official documents used in the University.

4. Policy Statement

4.1. ASU takes the issue of academic integrity that involves cases of plagiarism, collusion and cheating in all forms of academic assessment very seriously. Students who are found guilty of these practices will be penalized for doing so and, in some cases, could be expelled from the University.

4.2. All academic and non-academic staff shall at all times seek to promote a culture of academic integrity in their work. For example, all academic staff must teach their students how to avoid plagiarism in their writing (Sutherland-Smith (2008)).

4.3 All academic staff have a duty to ensure that:

- (a) They train students on how to find good sources of information and how to use it in their academic writing;
- (b) They give students sufficient time to complete assignments and examinations;
- (c) They set and moderate academic assessments to ensure that they are at the right academic level;
- (d) They support students so that they do not feel alienated so as to encourage them to subscribe to ASU values;
- (e) There is relentless campaign by staff and students to develop a culture of peer disapproval of academic misconduct.
- (f) They make clear at all times to all students and staff that all forms of academic misconduct including plagiarism is unacceptable behavior
- (g) They warn students that all forms of academic misconduct including plagiarism will be detected and punished (Pecorari (2013))

4.4 All academic staff must make it clear to their students that all assignment submissions shall be checked for plagiarism and that as such, students must ensure that all submitted work is their own and should not be purchased or obtained through unethical means.

4.5 Failure on the part of any member of academic and non-academic staff to uphold the principles of academic integrity constitutes unacceptable conduct. Disciplinary action following the University's Human Relations (HR) procedures will be taken against any member of staff who violates this academic integrity policy.

4.6 All assignment submissions by students in the University shall be accompanied by a signed declaration of originality. All academic staff and students must respect copyright enshrined in all printed materials such as books, journals, conference proceedings and online resources.

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4.7 All academic staff must acknowledge sources of all materials used in their teaching, and research. The Intellectual property contained in teaching materials such as course notes, PowerPoint slides, and assessments must be acknowledged.

4.8 All materials presented by academic staff to external agencies and for publication including conference and journal papers, book chapters, research grant applications, etc. must be consistent with the principles of academic integrity.

4.9 All academic and non-academic staff must ensure that all documents relating to their colleges and departments acknowledge all relevant sources of information and that they are free of any plagiarism. All staff must also ensure that all policies and documents presented to relevant University Committees for approval uphold the principles of academic integrity.

5. Key Stakeholders

Students, faculty and staff of ASU.

6. Procedures and Guidance

It is extremely essential that all forms of academic misconduct or malpractice are avoided in the first instance. Therefore, the E-Learning department in the University will conduct continuing professional development seminars for all academic staff each semester on plagiarism checking software such as Turnitin. These seminars will provide academic staff with an appreciation of how software such as Turnitin can be used to improve academic writing and how Turnitin application tools can be used objectively. This will prepare and enable academic staff to support students in their academic writing to produce work that is of a high standard and consistently complies with the principles of academic integrity.

For assignment submissions, the similarity index based on plagiarism checking software such as Turnitin shall not exceed 20%. It should be noted that an assignment submission that is deemed to contravene this guideline, is a matter of professional academic judgment provided that all work included is appropriately cited. In making such judgement, it is expected that the instructor takes into consideration the significance of the plagiarized text to the core contribution of the student.

University students and staff should be aware that all forms of academic misconduct are most likely to be detected by the University and serious penalties will be incurred by staff or students who contravene this policy.

The Staff Academic Misconduct Panel: Procedures

All cases of alleged academic misconduct by staff in a College shall be reported to the relevant Dean of College in the first instance. The Dean shall investigate the matter and the staff member concerned shall be given the opportunity to explain the matter and if appropriate, rectify the matter.

If plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct are suspected and the matter is not rectified, the case should be referred to the Staff Academic Misconduct Panel. This Panel will comprise of the following:

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Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research (Chairman)

Two Deans of College

University Legal Advisor

A member of staff from the Human Resources Department

The Dean of College in which the member of staff serves shall not be eligible to serve on the Staff Academic Misconduct Panel. A member of staff appearing before the Academic Misconduct Panel shall be entitled to be accompanied by a friend, colleague or trade union official if they so wish but not legal counsel. The Panel shall investigate the matter within 10 working days of the matter being referred to it and shall make an appropriate recommendation to the Vice Chancellor for action. The Panel shall be guided in its procedures and recommendations by the University disciplinary policy contained in the Human Resources Manual (September 2017 Revision).

A staff member who is dissatisfied with a recommendation of the **Staff Academic Misconduct Panel** may appeal to the Office of the Vice Chancellor.

The Student Academic Misconduct Panel: Procedures

A) Course work (e.g., assignments, projects) submitted for assessment:

The examiner of the submitted work should report cases of suspected plagiarism to the relevant Head of Department with evidence of the plagiarized text that might be obtained through search engines such as Google or other plagiarism detecting software. If plagiarism is suspected, the case should be referred to the Student Academic Misconduct Panel.

The submitted case should include:

- the student's name, ID number, course and program of study;
- a copy of the original text attached to the suspected plagiarized paragraphs;
- a copy of the instructions provided to students in relation to the given assignment/project.

The Student Academic Misconduct Panel will comprise of the following:

Head of Department (Chairman)

One member of academic staff

A member of staff from the Student Affairs Department

The Chair may invite additional members if necessary. The relevant course instructor shall not be a member of the Student Academic Misconduct Panel but shall be called as a witness. The student may also be interviewed by the Panel. If the Panel decides to do so, the interview of the student shall be conducted in the absence of the relevant course instructor.

Upon receipt of any allegation involving plagiarism or collusion, the Student Academic Misconduct Panel shall ascertain if there is sufficient evidence that a student may have violated assessment rules in order to gain unfair advantage over other students. If there is sufficient evidence of plagiarism or collusion, the Student Academic Misconduct Panel shall find the student guilty of academic misconduct. If the evidence is insufficient or not compelling, the Panel shall find the student not guilty of academic misconduct.

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If the Academic Misconduct Panel finds the student guilty of academic misconduct, the Panel will proceed to recommend the penalty depending on the nature of the offence. The Panel shall aim to reach a decision as soon as possible and this must be communicated to the student in writing by the Panel Chairman within three working days from the date of referral of the case. The range of academic offences and possible penalties are outlined below.

Minor Offence

Sometimes there might be a minor offence in relation to academic misconduct such as:

- A first offence of plagiarism and/or collusion in an assessment which counts towards the grade in a course irrespective of its weighting towards the final grade.

Recommendation

In such situations, the Student Academic Misconduct Panel shall recommend the following:

- Verbal warning;
- Resubmission of a modified or different piece of work within a reasonable period of time determined by the course instructor. The mark awarded in the resubmitted assignment shall not be capped.

Serious Offence

Serious cases of academic misconduct could involve either of the following:

- A second offence of plagiarism and/or collusion in an assessment which counts towards the grade in a course irrespective of its weighting towards the final grade;
- Use of another person's work with that person's knowledge.

Recommendation

In such situations, the Academic Misconduct Panel shall recommend one or more of the following:

- Attendance at a viva voce test to ascertain originality of the work;
- Failure of the assessed work with resubmission by a given date (to be determined by the Course Coordinator). The mark awarded in the resubmitted work shall be capped at the pass mark/grade;
- Resubmission of a different piece of work by a given date (to be determined by the Course Coordinator). The mark awarded in the resubmitted work shall be capped at the pass mark/grade;
- Written warning that future acts of plagiarism will have serious consequences and implications for completing the final award.

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Very Serious Offence

There might be situations where cases of plagiarism or collusion could be deemed to be of a grave nature. These will often be cases involving for example:

- use of another person's work without the knowledge of that person;
- a third act of plagiarism;
- getting another person to write his/her work or to represent him/her in an academic assessment;
- offering a bribe or attempting to offer a bribe or other forms of inducement to examiners, invigilators, University staff or other people connected with academic assessments;
- obtaining or seeking to obtain access to examination papers prior to the examination date and time;
- providing false evidence or data in academic assessment submissions;
- providing false evidence to claim prior work experience.

Recommendation

In such situations, the Academic Misconduct Panel shall recommend one or more of the following:

- failure of the whole course(s) and repeating the entire course(s). In this case, the mark obtained shall be capped at the pass mark/grade.
- repeating the whole semester with a condition of a capped pass mark/grade in each retaken course;
- final written warning that any future acts of plagiarism may lead to expulsion from the University and or/legal proceedings;
- termination of a student's studies.

B) A student who is caught cheating during exams or causing disruption with the intent to cheat will have their examination papers signed and dated by the invigilator to indicate cheating. The Invigilator should also prepare and sign an incident report (see the template below).

The invigilator should report cases of cheating to the Head of Department with evidence of the cheating. The Head of Department should refer such cases to the Academic Misconduct Panel. The Panel will comprise of the following:

Head of Department (Chairman)
One member of academic staff
A member from the Student Affairs Department

The Chair may also invite additional members if required. The relevant course coordinator or instructor shall not be a member of the Student Academic Misconduct Panel but shall be called as a witness. The student may also be interviewed by the Panel.

The submitted case should include:

- the student's exam scripts (with name, ID number, course and program of study);
- the invigilator's incident report

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Upon receipt of any allegation involving cheating or collusion during an examination, the Student Academic Misconduct Panel shall determine if there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the student has violated academic assessment rules in order to gain unfair advantage over his/her peers. If the evidence is insufficient or not compelling, the Panel shall find the student not guilty of academic misconduct. If there is sufficient evidence of cheating and/or collusion and disruption with the intent to cheat during examinations, the Student Academic Misconduct Panel shall find the student guilty of academic misconduct.

Recommendation

Any student who is caught cheating or attempting to cheat during an examination shall be given a zero in that particular examination and a verbal warning if they are first time offenders.

A student who is caught cheating or attempting to cheat for the second time shall be given a zero in that particular examination and a written warning. The student's parents or guardian shall also be informed.

A student who is caught cheating or attempting to cheat for the third time or more shall be given a zero in that particular examination and will be reported to the office of Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research /Vice Chancellor. Such a student may at the discretion of the Vice Chancellor be suspended or expelled from the University.

The Student Academic Misconduct Panel shall aim to reach a decision as soon as possible and this must be communicated to the student in writing within three working days from the date of referral of the case.

The Student Academic Misconduct Panel (Appeals)

Students who want to appeal against a decision by the Student Academic Misconduct Panel relating to course work-related assessment or/and the examinations must complete an appeal form (see below) explaining the grounds upon which the appeal is based. Normally, this should include new evidence that was not present during proceedings of the Student Academic Misconduct Panel which led to the recommendation of a penalty. All appeals shall in the first instance be considered in the relevant College by a Panel chaired by the Dean. The Student Academic Misconduct Panel (Appeals) shall consist of the following:

Dean of College (Chairman)
Director of Student Affairs
Three members of academic staff

A member of staff who serves on the Student Academic Misconduct Panel shall not be eligible to serve on the Appeals Panel. The relevant course coordinator or instructor shall not be a member of the Student Academic Misconduct Panel (Appeals) but may be called as a witness. The student may also be interviewed by the Appeals Panel. If the Appeals Panel decides to do so, the interview of the student shall be conducted in the absence of the relevant course instructor.

A student who is dissatisfied with a ruling of the Appeals Panel may appeal further to the Office of Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research or Vice Chancellor

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7. References

- Pecorari, Diane (2013) Teaching to Avoid Plagiarism: How to promote good source use, Open University Press, Maidenhead.
- Sutherland-Smith, Wendy (2008) Plagiarism, The Internet and Student learning: Improving Academic Integrity, Routledge, Abingdon.

8. General provisions

- Everything that is not provided for in this policy/procedure is subject to the relevant Omani law and the internal regulation of the university
- Any violation or breach of one of the provisions of this policy/procedure makes those responsible accountable in accordance with the provisions of the relevant Omani law and the internal regulations of the university.
- Any exception from this policy/procedure upon application shall have no effect against the university or others unless it has been approved by the Vice Chancellor or Board of Directors as the case may be.

9. Revision History

Version	Author/Reviewer	Revision(s) made and justification	Date
II	DVCAAR	Reduced the permissible similarity index from 25% to 20% following a benchmarking with other HEIs.	18 April 2022