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The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England & Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to its secondary activity of credit broking.
Summary of policy

This policy applies to all Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate students and microcredential learners and sets out The Open University’s position on academic conduct, including plagiarism and exam misconduct. The policy:

- defines the offences The Open University recognises as academic misconduct, including:
  - plagiarism;
  - self-plagiarism;
  - enabling plagiarism;
  - collusion;
  - contract cheating; and
  - misconduct in an exam;
- explains how academic misconduct is normally identified;
- explains the procedures that will be followed when poor academic conduct is identified; and
- outlines the type of penalties you may expect to receive if you are found to have engaged in academic misconduct.

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces the Plagiarism Policy.
Scope

What this document covers

This document covers academic conduct that undermines the academic reputation and integrity of The Open University. For all other disciplinary offences please see the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.

The Academic Conduct policy applies to all registered or formerly registered students of The Open University as defined in the Academic Regulations, including the groups outlined below (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Access students
- Undergraduate students on a module only
- Undergraduate students on a qualification
- Postgraduate taught students
- Apprentices
- Microcredential learners
- Alumni

Postgraduate research students should refer to the Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy and the Code of Practice for Research.

Please read through and familiarise yourself with this policy. You may need to return to it at different times during your study. You can also refer to the interactive resource All my own work and Developing Good Academic Practice on OpenLearn and the library resources on referencing and plagiarism for more guidance and advice on how to develop good academic practices and avoid academic misconduct. For more information on how to avoid committing academic conduct offences, please check the resources available to you within your module materials. If you still need advice you should contact your tutor for further support.
Related Documentation

Refer to the following documentation alongside this document:

- Related internal student policies or procedures
  - Code of Practice for Student Discipline
  - Code of Practice for Student Assessment
  - Assessment Handbook
  - Exam arrangements booklets
- Relevant UK quality codes
  - QAA UK Quality Code for Learning and Teaching
  - QAA UK Quality Code for Enabling Student Achievement

The Open University Student Charter Principles

This policy aligns with the following The Open University Student Charter principles:

- Principle 2: We aim to inspire and enable learning.
- Principle 3: We share the responsibility of learning.
- Principle 4: We work together to secure the Open University’s mission and values – to be open to people, to places, to methods and to ideas; and to be inclusive, innovative and responsive.
Introduction

Academic conduct at The Open University

As defined by The Open University’s Royal Charter, the objectives of the University include:

The advancement and dissemination of learning and knowledge by teaching and research by a diversity of means … and shall be to provide education of University and professional standards for its students and to promote the educational well-being of the community generally.

These objectives can only be achieved if members of The Open University community – students and staff – can work with each other to allow freedom of thought and expression within a framework of respect for the rights of other persons. To achieve and maintain these conditions, to protect The Open University's essential activities from disruption, and to ensure academic standards, we have policies and procedures to follow where behaviour falls short of the standard expected from you.

Compliance with national quality standards

Higher Education providers have an obligation to ensure that awards they make meet nationally agreed standards. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code requires providers to use ‘…assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent’ to achieve this. Reliability in this context means ensuring that assessments accurately reflect or test the extent to which you have achieved the learning outcomes of your programme of study. Academic misconduct, including plagiarism and contract cheating, represents a clear threat to providers’ ability to assure the standards of their qualifications, and as such to the reputation of UK Higher Education as a whole.

Studying with the Open University

As a student, you agree to abide by The Open University's regulations, policies, procedures and rules when you register. It is The Open University's expectation that you carry out your studies within these rules.
Any improper activity or behaviour which may give you, or another student, an academic advantage in an assessment is considered to be an act of academic misconduct and is unacceptable in an academic community. You must take responsibility for the academic integrity of your work by developing good academic practice, which includes asking for clarification where necessary.

The Open University considers the following practices to be academic misconduct:

- Plagiarism
- Self-plagiarism
- Enabling plagiarism
- Collusion
- Contract cheating
- Misconduct in an exam

Any allegations of student misconduct (academic or non-academic) will normally be dealt with in accordance with the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.

Your tutor can offer advice on maintaining good academic integrity and your student support team can advise on the implementation of policy (you can find all contact details on StudentHome).

**Policy**

1. **Purpose**

1.1 Academic assessments exist to help you learn and to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding. Grades and comments from your tutors about your assignments show how fully you have demonstrated this and give you credit for your learning. Good academic practice is:

   **The process of completing your academic work independently and honestly, using your own words; using the appropriate academic style and with all sources fully attributed according to academic requirements.**
1.2 The objectives of this policy are:

- To set The Open University’s expectations of students in adopting good academic practice and academic integrity;
- To define what The Open University considers to be poor academic practice and offences relating to academic conduct;
- To explain what will happen when poor academic practice is followed or an academic conduct offence is committed and how this will be dealt with.

2. Policy principles

2.1 The Open University aims to encourage you as a student to develop academic integrity by teaching you about good academic practice. This will be done as part of the modules you study and your tutor will also support your skills development in this area. You can also access information about this from different areas such the Library, the interactive resources All my own work and Developing Good Academic Practice on OpenLearn and Student Hub Live sessions.

2.2 **Good academic practice** is about making sure that anyone who reads your work can easily identify your thoughts and ideas on a subject, and can distinguish these from the thoughts and ideas of others.

2.3 **Academic integrity** is an all-encompassing term. In this context, The Open University uses it to define the good academic practice you use to demonstrate your learning within your subject or programme of study, and how you put this learning into practice through your assessed work. It allows tutors and other students to assess fairly the extent of your learning progression and encourages everyone to respect and acknowledge the work of others.

2.4 If you display poor academic practice that amounts to academic misconduct – whether intentional or not – there will be consequences to this and, potentially, penalties applied to your academic record.
3. Offences regarded as academic misconduct

Academic misconduct covers a range of behaviour but in essence it is using material that is not your own original work to gain some form of benefit, or enabling others to do so. It can be caused by anything from poor study skills and a lack of understanding of what is expected at your level of study to straightforward fraud in the form of intentional cheating.

This section outlines various behaviours that The Open University considers to be academic misconduct.

3.1 Plagiarism (using the work of others as your own)

3.1.1 Plagiarism is using someone else’s ideas or work and presenting it as your own. It includes:

- copying other people’s work if you provide a source but do not give a specific quote with a clearly defined beginning and end;
- summarising or paraphrasing in your own words the ideas or information taken from a source without citing that source.

3.1.2 If you submit an assignment that contains work that is not your own, without clearly indicating this to the marker (fully acknowledging your sources using the rules of the specified academic referencing style), you are committing plagiarism and this is academic misconduct.

3.1.3 Plagiarism could occur in a piece of assessed work by:

- using a choice phrase or sentence that you have come across or translated from another source;
- copying word-for-word directly from a text or other source;
- paraphrasing or translating the words from a text or other source very closely, using much of the original wording;
- using text downloaded from the internet, including that exchanged on social networks;
- borrowing statistics or assembled facts from another person or source;
• copying or downloading figures, photographs, pictures, or diagrams without acknowledging your sources;

• copying comments or notes from a tutor;

• copying from the notes or essays of a fellow student;

• copying from your own notes, on a text, tutorial, video, or lecture, that contain direct quotations from tutors;

• using text obtained from assignment writing sites, organisations, or private individuals;

• obtaining work from other sources and submitting it as your own.

3.1.4 You may also be investigated for plagiarism if your tutor is unable to verify the work is your own.

3.1.5 It is important to understand that if you do not acknowledge fully the sources that have contributed to and informed your work, you are misrepresenting your knowledge and abilities. Since this may give you an unfair academic advantage in assessment it is considered to be academic misconduct.

3.1.6 You can avoid plagiarising by:

• always writing in your own words;

• acknowledging your sources.

3.1.7 The interactive resource All my own work on OpenLearn will help you gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of how to develop good academic practices, which in turn will help you to avoid plagiarism. See appendix 1 for more information about how to avoid plagiarism.

3.2 Self-plagiarism

3.2.1 The reuse of significant, identical – or nearly identical – portions of your own work without acknowledging that you are doing so is sometimes described as ‘self-plagiarism’. Self-plagiarism is not encouraged at The Open University and may in some circumstances be seen as an offence and be investigated or penalised under the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.
3.2.2 You can’t usually gain credit for submitting the same work twice so if you repeat work which is substantially the same you may not be awarded marks for it, unless the assignment asks you to review and redraft your earlier work.

- If you do re-use previously submitted work, in whole or in part, you must cite that work as having been used in the assessment of a previous assignment or module.
- If you defer a module and resubmit work from a previous TMA in a subsequent presentation of the same module you must still acknowledge your earlier work.

3.3 Enabling plagiarism

3.3.1 Enabling plagiarism is anything which might encourage or enable other students to commit plagiarism, including:

- posting your work or that of other students onto a website or social media platform;
- offering answers to assessment questions posted by other students online or on social media;
- making available, selling, or advertising for sale your work or that of other students in any form or by any means (print, electronic, recording or otherwise);
- posting assignment or exam questions and/or OU assignment guidance materials onto a commercial website that offers tailored third-party answers.

3.3.2 Enabling plagiarism is considered academic misconduct regardless of whether the work you shared was a draft, incomplete or finished piece of work and whether or not the work includes marks, comments or other materials produced by a tutor, supervisor or other marker and whether or not you intended to enable or encourage plagiarism. The only exception is where prior consent has been given by The Open University in writing.
3.4 Collusion

3.4.1 Collusion is working with one or more other students to produce a piece of work that you submit as your own work, or allowing other students to use any part of your work as if it is their own.

3.4.2 This can include:

- working together with others on an assignment;
- sharing research or results from experiments;
- discussing the assignment with other students in too much detail or working together to prepare or share drafts of your work such that the work produced is very similar, for example in sources used, structure or wording;
- allowing other students to read through your draft or finished assignments before they have completed and submitted their own work;
- proof reading someone’s assignment and changing the content, meaning, or structure of the work or correcting facts or calculations within the assignment.

3.4.3 Working together with other students on a piece of work that will be submitted for individual assessment is not permitted and can lead to all the students involved being investigated for academic misconduct.

3.4.4 Discussing the material and ideas you are learning with your tutor and other students is beneficial and is encouraged. However, when you start to write your assignment you must make sure this is entirely your own work and you should not share it with other students.

3.4.5 For some assignments, you may be instructed to collaborate with other students to prepare data, conduct research, or draft work. In these cases, working together is encouraged but you should read the assignment guidance carefully to understand which parts of the assignment can be completed in collaboration with others and which are expected to be your own work.
3.5 **Contract cheating**

3.5.1 Contract cheating is the act of engaging with commercial assignment help services, including on websites and social media, to either obtain or make available assignments, assignment questions or Open University assessment resources. Contract cheating can involve either committing or enabling plagiarism.

3.5.2 Commercial assignment help services can include essay mills, services which offer a repository of answers to assessment questions, services which enable you to upload or share assessment questions and services which allow you to obtain tailored or automated answers to assessment questions.

3.5.3 If you use any of the following services you may be considered to be engaged in contract cheating:

- Using tailored services to write essays or other types of assignments;
- Using commercial services which offer access to a bank of answers to assessment questions and submitting any part of these as your own work;
- Engaging others to conduct research on your behalf;
- Posting assignment questions or assessment resources to commercial websites or other platforms;
- Requesting answers or solutions to assessment questions from other individuals or services;
- Using services that offer automated answers or solutions to assessment questions and submitting these as your own work;
- Using translation tools to generate text and submitting this as your own work.

3.5.4 Some services may use threats to report you to your institution for plagiarism to extort money. If this happens to you, you should always report the incident to The Open University so appropriate action can be taken. The Open University will take this into account in any subsequent academic conduct investigations.
3.6 **Misconduct in an exam**

3.6.1 Misconduct in an exam is any behaviour in which you seek to gain an advantage over other students by engaging in inappropriate conduct.

3.6.2 Misconduct in a remote, online and/or uninvigilated exam includes any of the offences listed in 3.1 to 3.5 of this policy or defined in the [Remote Exam Arrangements Booklet](#). You are not normally asked to cite references in a remote exam, but you should take care to write in your own words and not copy from other sources.

3.6.3 Misconduct in a face to face or invigilated exam includes the possession of prohibited materials or equipment in an exam, engaging someone to impersonate you in an exam, or seeking to gain advantage in other ways or from other persons as defined in the [Exam Arrangements Booklet](#) and the [Code of Practice for Student Assessment](#). You should make sure that you are familiar with these before attending the exam.

3.6.4 A high standard of conduct is expected in all exams. Any misconduct is seen as a serious matter that can result in disciplinary action.

### Procedure

The following procedures describe how academic misconduct offences are detected, investigated and penalised.

4. **Detecting academic misconduct**

4.1 **Use of plagiarism detection software**

4.1.1 When you submit an assignment (i.e. either TMAs, emTMAs, EMAs or remote exams) you are asked to tick a box to declare that the work you are submitting is your own.

4.1.2 The files are automatically run through two types of plagiarism detection software soon after the published cut-off date. The Open University uses Turnitin to detect matches between your work and the module materials and other online sources, and CopyCatch to detect matches between assignments across current and historical cohorts of students. See appendix 2 for more information about how The Open University uses plagiarism detection software.
4.1.3 When you submit an assignment to the eTMA system you must confirm you have submitted the correct work. Therefore, this will be treated as your final assignment and checked for plagiarism even if you have accidentally submitted a draft (or another document) instead of your final version. If you realise you have submitted the wrong version of an assignment, you can resubmit another version of your assignment before the cut-off date as long as the assignment hasn’t been collected for marking.

4.2 The role of the tutor or marker in detecting academic misconduct

4.2.1 Plagiarism detection software is used in parallel with the marking by the tutor and tutors do not normally have access to Turnitin or CopyCatch reports, so if the module team finds evidence of plagiarism in the software reports your tutor may not be aware of it.

4.2.2 Tutors and markers may still be able to identify potential cases of academic misconduct when marking your work. They could identify possible changes in your writing style which may indicate that you have not written the assignment yourself. They can make this judgement by comparing your assignments across a module. There may also be significant differences in content or style within the same piece of work which could suggest that not all of the words used by you are your own.

4.2.3 For EMAs and remote exams, tutors are normally asked to check your work against other TMAs you have submitted during the module to confirm they have no reason to believe the work you have submitted is not your own. This process is called verification.

4.2.4 Tutors and markers are also familiar with module materials and can identify when you may be using information from these materials without referencing appropriately.

4.2.5 If your tutor or marker is concerned about possible academic misconduct in your work, or is unable to verify your work, they will raise this with senior staff on the module. You may be offered an individual study skills support session or referred to an Academic Conduct Officer (ACO) for disciplinary investigation.

4.2.6 If your case is referred for investigation you won’t get a mark for that piece of work until the investigation has concluded.
4.3 The academic conduct process and investigations

4.3.1 After your assignment is run through the plagiarism detection software, a report is produced which shows matches for each piece of work against module materials, other students' work and/or online sources. These matches are closely studied by a member of the relevant module team.

4.3.2 If there is cause for concern raised either through plagiarism detection software or by a marker, you may either be referred for study skills support or referred for further investigation by an Academic Conduct Officer (ACO) within the faculty. This happens alongside - but separate from - the marking process.

4.3.3 If you are referred for study skills support, a disciplinary marker won't be added to your student record but a note will be made of the referral, including what it was for and what support/information you were offered. If you are found to have plagiarised in future, the fact that you were offered specific support on the subject will be taken into account by an ACO when deciding on a disciplinary outcome and penalty.

4.3.4 If your case is referred for disciplinary investigation, the first step of the process is to alert you to the findings and invite you to respond to the ACO's concerns in writing, either by letter or by email, within 10 working days of receiving the ACO's letter. The sooner you respond, the quicker your case will be processed.

4.3.5 The second step gives the ACO time to assess all the evidence to hand and decide whether a breach of the Code of Practice for Student Discipline has occurred and if so, what penalty should be applied. The penalties are set out in the Code of Practice for Student Discipline in sections SD 2.1 and SD 2.2.

4.3.6 The third step will be to write to you with the decision made in relation to your submitted assignment. If a breach of policy is identified, a decision will be made as to whether a penalty should be applied. If no breach is found and the case is dismissed, it will be removed from your student record. You may still be referred for study skills support to help you to improve your academic practice.

4.3.7 If it is found that you have used the services of a contract cheating website or essay mill or that you have used somebody else to write the assessment for you then this is considered to be serious academic misconduct and you may be referred directly to the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC) for investigation.
4.3.8 Academic conduct offences will be investigated as soon as possible after an issue is raised. In some cases, this may mean that an investigation may take place months or even years after the offence was originally committed, for instance if your material is found on an external website some time after it was first posted. You can still be investigated for academic misconduct after you graduate from The Open University.

4.4 Use of viva-voce assessments in academic misconduct investigations

4.4.1 If there is any doubt that your assignment is your own work, you may be asked to take a viva-voce assessment which will be designed to test whether or not you have written it yourself. The outcome of the viva-voce will be one of the forms of evidence an ACO will use to make their decision about the investigation into your case.

4.4.4 If you do not engage with or agree to take the viva-voce offered then a decision will be taken without this piece of evidence. This could result in you receiving a zero for the assignment.

4.4.5 If, after investigation, the ACO is satisfied that you have written the assignment then you will be awarded the appropriate score as marked by your tutor.

4.4.6 If, after investigation, the ACO is not satisfied that you have written the whole of the assignment yourself, they will award an appropriate penalty. You may receive zero for the assignment or have marks deducted to reflect that part of your assignment was not your own work.

4.5 Academic misconduct in an exam

4.5.1 Invigilators are responsible for making sure face to face exams run smoothly and according to The Open University’s rules and regulations. They have full authority over admission to the exam room, permission for temporary absence and discipline in general.

4.5.2 If an invigilator has concerns that you have behaved inappropriately or you have been found with unauthorised materials in a face-to-face exam, they must report this to The Open University. The invigilator will complete a suspected misconduct form which they will ask you to sign at the end of the exam.
4.5.3 This form will be passed to the Academic Conduct Services team within Assessment, Credit and Qualifications who will decide if a case should be referred to the CDC. If no referral is made to the CDC, we will write to you to remind you of the rules relating to exam conduct.

4.5.4 If a referral to the CDC is made, the secretary of the CDC will contact you directly, as set out in section SD 5.4 of the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.

4.5.5 Misconduct in a remote exam will be dealt with under the procedures set out in sections 4.1 to 4.4 above.

5. Penalties for academic misconduct

5.1 Types of penalties

5.1.1 You may receive an informal caution from the module team chair or from the disciplinary authority (usually an Academic Conduct Officer but may also include the Central Disciplinary Committee) if they consider an offence has been committed but it is not sufficiently serious to warrant a disciplinary or an academic penalty. This will remain on your record and can be taken into account if you are referred for plagiarism investigations in future.

5.1.2 A formal caution is a penalty under the Code of Practice for Student Discipline and can only be given to you by a disciplinary authority. You will always get confirmation of this in writing. This will stay on your record for the remainder of your studies.

5.1.3 The CDC can impose a range of penalties according to severity of the offence. Full information about all possible cautions and penalties can be found in section SD 2 of the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.

5.1.4 If you are found to have plagiarised any of your assignment and have received an informal or formal caution or any other penalty, it is likely that any marks you received on the portion of your assignment that was plagiarised will be deducted from the score for that assignment (which may reduce your score to zero).
5.2 Impact of penalties on your study

5.2.1 If you are studying within an accredited professional programme, any case of academic misconduct confirmed with the application of a penalty may be reported to the relevant professional body, if this forms part of the required standards for your profession. In some cases, consideration will also be given to whether a Fitness to Practise investigation should be undertaken.

5.2.2 Any penalty where marks are deducted from your assignment score could have a detrimental effect on your overall module result and could mean the difference between passing or failing the module. A penalty which reduces the grade of pass you receive for your module could also affect your overall degree classification.

6. Methods of appeal

Methods of appeal are set out in section SD 10 of the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.

Academic Conduct Officers send a factsheet called Outcomes of Academic Conduct Investigations with the communication outlining the outcome of their investigation. You must read this before submitting an appeal against their decision.
Glossary of terms

Academic Conduct Officer (ACO)

Academic staff based within faculties who are specialists in the area of academic conduct and who are disciplinary authorities as approved by the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC).

Academic integrity

The Open University uses this term to define the good academic practice that enables every individual to demonstrate how much and what they have learned within their subject or programme of study, and that they are able to put this into practice.

All my own work

An interactive resource on OpenLearn designed to illustrate difficulties that students might face in their studies and how to avoid plagiarism and practice good academic conduct.

Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC)

Its main functions are to consider serious and repeat offences as set out in the Code of Practice for Student Discipline; to hear appeals against decisions of other Disciplinary Authorities; and to impose penalties proportionately and consistently under the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.

Code of Practice for Student Discipline

The Code defines conduct that is generally considered within society as a whole, and at The Open University in particular, to constitute an offence. It also defines penalties, authorities, rights to appeal, and procedural details concerning allegations of misconduct, investigations, disciplinary hearings, and appeals.

Collaboration

Working together with other students to complete a task or achieve a goal. This can include sharing research or outcomes from experiments where the module encourages this, but not jointly working on an assignment where the module makes it clear that it should be submitted by separate individuals and awarded separate marks based on distinguishing a student’s unique contribution.
Collusion

Knowingly making any of your academic work available or offering it to another person for presentation as if it were their own, or using the work of another student as your own for assessment. By doing either you are guilty of collusion.

Commercial assignment help services

These can include essay mills, services which offer a repository of answers to assessment questions, services which enable you to upload or share assessment questions, and any other services which allow you to obtain tailored or automated answers to assessment questions.

Contract cheating

A form of cheating where a student submits work to a university for assessment, where they have used any services provided by a third party. The contract with the student can include payment or other favours, but this is not always the case.

Developing Good Academic Practice (DGAP)

A website that sets out how you can develop good academic practice when writing your assignments.

Essay mill

A business that allows customers to commission an original piece of writing on a particular topic which they present as their own work. By doing this they may commit academic fraud.

Exam Arrangements Booklet

Essential information to help you organise yourself before your exam which details what you can and can’t take into your exam.

Fitness to Practise

The procedures which set out how The Open University fulfils its responsibility with respect to students’ professional suitability or fitness to practise for training/education and registration with the respective regulatory body. The Fitness to Practise procedures are used in addition to the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.
**Formal caution**

Issued by disciplinary authorities and permanently recorded on the student’s electronic record for as long as that record is held, in line with our [Retention of Student Data and Records policy](#).

**Good academic practice**

Making sure that anyone who reads your work can easily identify your thoughts and ideas on a subject and can distinguish these from the thoughts and ideas of others.

**Informal caution**

A written warning from a module team chair or Disciplinary Authority of the Open University. This is not a penalty under the [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#), but a record of the correspondence will be kept on the student’s record. Further misconduct may result in disciplinary action being taken.

**Penalties**

A penalty can comprise a range of measures under the [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#). These are recorded on the student profile and in some cases, where applicable, referred for ‘fitness to practise’. Penalties may be imposed by an ACO, a Disciplinary Authority, or the CDC as a result of any breach of policy relating to academic conduct.

**Paraphrasing**

Using your own words to express someone else’s ideas or message without changing the meaning of the original text.

**Plagiarism**

Using the work of other people to gain some form of benefit without fully acknowledging that the work came from someone else.

**Prohibited materials**

Relates to materials which are not allowed in an exam room.
Self plagiarism

The reuse of significant, identical, or nearly identical portions of your own work without acknowledging that you are doing so or citing the original work.

Study skills

You may be referred for study skills support to help you improve your academic practice if it has been identified that improvements need to be made.

Verification

For EMAs and remote exams, this is a process where your tutor checks your work against other TMAs you have submitted during the module to confirm they have no reason to believe the work you have submitted is not your own.

Further clarification

If you have any queries around the content provided within this document and how to interpret it, please contact your Student Support Team who are specially trained to advise on the implementation of policy. Alternatively, you can contact your tutor for advice on how to maintain good academic integrity. All contact details can be found on StudentHome.

If you have any comments about this policy document and how it might be improved, please submit these to APG-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk.

Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact the Student Support Team via http://www.open.ac.uk/contact/ (phone +44 (0)300 303 5303), or your dedicated Student Support Team via StudentHome if you are a current Open University student.
Appendix 1 – Guidance on good academic conduct

Detailed guidance on how to properly acknowledge sources used in writing can be found on the Library site at Guidance on referencing. Also, here is some initial guidance on avoiding plagiarism.

Guidance on how to avoid plagiarism

As a student you are encouraged to read around your subject and consult various sources including the module materials but you must provide a reference for any source used in your assessed work. Copying from such sources without acknowledgement is considered to be plagiarism and will not be accepted by The Open University. You must make it clear which words and ideas are yours and which have come from elsewhere.

- If you are using the exact sequence of words that appear in the source, this is quoting. You must show these words in quotation marks accompanied by an in-text citation/in-text reference. You should aim to be highly selective in your use of quotations, as you may be limiting the number of marks you can gain if you use somebody else’s words.

- You should learn to write in your own words. If you are summarising (sometimes called paraphrasing) ideas or information from a source you must acknowledge the source by including an appropriate in-text citation/in-text reference.

If you are new to academic study, you may find it difficult to understand these academic conventions and this can lead to poor academic practice. In the same way as you want to learn about your chosen area of study, it is equally important that you learn how to write and present your work so that it meets the requirements of good academic practice.

- Look at the activity All my own work on OpenLearn for more guidance about good academic conduct.

- Carefully read all the module specific advice, especially statements concerning plagiarism and how to reference your sources.

- Make sure you use your tutor’s feedback on your assignments which may include how you are using and referencing sources.
Remember:

- Assignments provide a vehicle for assessing your performance during your module and contribute to your overall module result.

- Assignments assist you in understanding your subject and aid your learning on the module.

- When you attempt to use the ideas and terms of the module independently you learn more thoroughly and develop your own writing style.

- You are likely to perform better in examinations if you have learned how to write your own answers to questions in assignments.
Appendix 2 – Text comparison software for TMAs, emTMAs and EMAs

Academic misconduct often takes one of two forms:

i) misuse of information from online sources; and

ii) collusion, or working too closely with other students to answer an assessed task or question resulting in the production of a joint answer or solution (whether intentionally or not) which allows you to gain an unfair advantage over others in your assignments.

To check you are working in a fair and academically appropriate manner, The Open University uses two types of text comparison software to detect potential cases of academic misconduct in work submitted for assessment. These are:

- CopyCatch, which compares your assignment with assignments submitted by all other students on the module (as well as previous presentations of the module where appropriate).
  - CopyCatch is used to check for cases of collusion and/or the use of an assignment that has been made available in a number of ways.
  - CopyCatch produces ‘similarity’ reports between matched pairs of scripts.

- Turnitin, which carries out the equivalent of an internet search, looking for matches between the text of your assignment with all forms of information and resources publicly available on the internet.
  - Turnitin is used to check for cases of direct copying, and/or not properly referencing various types of source materials. It can also be used to compare your assignments with the module materials and other commonly used or provided references.
  - For each assignment submitted to Turnitin, an ‘originality’ report is produced showing the percentage of text that matches specific websites.
What happens

Some level of matching between your assignment and other sources is normally expected. For example, you may have used information obtained from other sites and/or scientific papers as a direct quote to support your answer or illustrate a particular point (making sure that you have referenced this in the appropriate manner). You will probably also use terms and phrases which can be described as ‘common knowledge’ within your particular subject area and level of study. These do not need to be referenced, but are likely to arise in a similar format on several sites and other students’ answers.

The module team will take these matters into account when reviewing the reports from Turnitin and CopyCatch and deciding whether an academic conduct offence has occurred. If there are concerns:

- the module team may decide that you need further guidance or support to develop your academic writing skills;
- the module team may decide that what the reports are showing is more serious, in which case they will refer the matter to the Academic Conduct Officer for consideration.

Data Protection

The Open University will not submit any personal details about you to either system, although if your work has your PI number on it you may be identified from that. Your work will not be stored on any external system and so will not be accessible to anyone outside The Open University.