# Fostering academic integrity: a guide for UCL staff

Nicola Brown (UCL Institute of Education - IOE) provides guidance that supplements the academic integrity Moodle course and how to guide your students through plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.

## Purpose of this guide

There is an academic integrity Moodle course for our students, and a version for staff. This guide complements the modules in Moodle.

* **Academic integrity (for staff)**: https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=14717
* **Plagiarism and Academic Writing for Students 19/20**: <https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/enrol/index.php?id=34>

The guide provides you, as a member of UCL staff, the background and context as well as further resources to learn more about academic integrity.

It is intended to provide ideas and stimuli for how you could use the online module in conjunction with activities in classes, seminars and/or lectures.

This guide is meant to offer you useful ideas and a starting point for further developing awareness of how teaching academic integrity and prevention of breaches to academic conduct may be embedded in everyday practices.

This resource is designed to support:

* reflections on current practices around academic integrity
* providing better understanding of academic integrity and academic misconduct
* fostering conversations between staff and students about academic integrity
* developing practical strategies to build a culture of academic integrity.

The Moodle course is based on a plagiarism prevention workshop. You can access the original teaching materials through the UCL open educational repository.

## The rise of plagiarism, essay writing mills and other forms of academic misconduct

There is an increased focus in the higher education sector, in the national and international press and across social media on reports of academic integrity; plagiarism and the phenomenon of essay writing mills are particularly high-profile topics.

Newton’s longitudinal systematic review, ‘How Common is Commercial Contract Cheating in Higher Education and is it Increasing?’ (August 2018), identified increased levels of plagiarism and significant increases in use of contract services such as essay mills.

In 2018 the Russell Group of universities also lent support to the petition of the UK Government to ban the provision of essay mills and contract cheating services. This followed similar successful moves in New Zealand, Ireland, Australia and numerous states within the USA. Government support was sought to stem this profitable, tough and digitised business in a more systematic and powerful way than universities could manage alone.

Despite this level of interest, many higher education institutions continue to struggle to prevent plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.

Contract cheating such as essay mill services are notoriously difficult to detect although use of these services is suspected.

“Contract cheating is a form of academic dishonesty in which students pay others to complete their coursework. The term was coined in a 2006 study by Thomas Lancaster and Robert Clarke of the University of Central England in Birmingham (now known as Birmingham City University).” Source: Wikipedia.

## Experiences of academic misconduct at the IOE

Within the IOE, detected academic misconduct is often unintentional, with students not necessarily aware of the expectations or consequences surrounding academic integrity.

The IOE annual report of Academic Misconduct (2017/18) showed that:

* 27 major plagiarism cases were recorded
* none involved contract cheating and most involved plagiarism
* most offences are identified through electronic tools such as the similarity score provided by Turnitin.

At IOE there are some clear trends in terms of the types of assessment where plagiarism is detected and where contract cheating is suspected, the long essay is particularly vulnerable.

Programmes with higher proportions of international students also record more frequent occurrences of plagiarism.

As a consequence of recent developments within the IOE, our student body has changed drastically, and we now see more full-time students who are from international backgrounds, and younger in age.

Without intending to stereotype students, there is a case to be made for supporting our students from international backgrounds where the presence and expectations of codes of academic integrity might differ.

Also, the art of distilling ideas and concepts (Brown and Janssen, ‘Preventing plagiarism and fostering academic integrity: a practical approach’ 2017) is a culturally nuanced practice which can become an even harder challenge for overseas students and for anyone for whom English is a second or third language.

In the autumn term of 2015, my colleague Rosalind Janssen and I were required to prepare and provide evidence for a UCL panel relating to a major plagiarism case.

As we engaged more deeply with the processes and issues surrounding plagiarism, we realised there was a need for activities that would help students understand more about preventing academic misconduct. The idea for our plagiarism prevention workshop was born. From then on, we systematically and strategically developed the workshop, implemented it in our own programme and demonstrated it to other colleagues, who in turn implemented it in theirs.

The resources that are available now, the online module and this guide, are the outcome of continued iterations of the original face-to-face workshop.

### The UK Quality Assurance Agency review of academic integrity

In 2017 the UK Quality Assurance Agency published its review of academic integrity: Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education.

The report highlighted increases in occurrences of plagiarism and the increasing use of professional essay writing mills.

Whilst advising the need for wider support from government, the report also set out the importance of prevention and actions that are within range of all Higher Education institutions.

This includes:

* staff and student training to prevent poor academic writing skills, such as poor referencing resulting in plagiarism offences;
* the need to frame expectations of academic integrity and to set out very clearly local consequences where academic misconduct is found;
* the need to "design out" opportunities for plagiarism through diverse and dynamic assessment and curriculum;
* greater use of detection technology and tools in tandem with good awareness of student capabilities.

## Teaching students what academic misconduct is

Most students are not aware they are committing academic misconduct.

### "I didn't know that was plagiarism"

Many cases of academic misconduct and breaches of academic integrity are not intentional and mischievous acts.

They are often the results of:

* poor time-management
* underestimation of course and assessment demands
* poor levels of understanding of what constitutes misconduct and how to avoid it.

All students in the Higher Education sector come to us from previous educational institutions, where learning and assessment may have happened in radically different ways and in response to national curricula placing particular demands on teachers and pupils.

The recalling of facts and even analyses may not necessarily have been seen as a breach of academic integrity, but as a necessity to pass relevant examinations.

### "I collaborated with my friend"

For students it is difficult to identify the fine line between collusion and collaboration.

On the one hand, they are often required to work in groups and collaborate with others in order to develop ideas or presentations. On the other hand, students are told not to collude.

What may be seen as collaboration in one module could be collusion in another.

It is not surprising that students are confused and may unintentionally breach academic integrity.

### "Turnitin decides on what is plagiarism"

When students are required to submit their assignments through plagiarism detection software programmes, they are often unclear what exactly the software is or does.

Many students have heard of plagiarism detection programmes before they enter university, but have not been shown how these programmes work and what they can or cannot do.

As a consequence, myths around those programmes are rife and scare students unnecessarily.

### "I just forgot a reference"

Students, especially those from secondary education, have been taught for years to recall and rewrite learnt facts and knowledge.

For them, not adding a reference is therefore not a malicious act of trying to hide their sources. It is really an expression of their misunderstanding of the relevance of references and crediting each other for ideas, knowledge or intellectual property.

### "I do what I learnt in the academic writing skills session"

When students prepare writing an assignment, they will draw upon what they learnt in their skills sessions.

They tend to focus on referencing practices and paraphrasing. However, they do not necessarily realise that through their writing and working practices they unconsciously copy the sources and fall into the traps of sounding like someone else rather than using their own voices.

## An online module that should be supported by local activities

The online module aims to:

* educate students, so they understand what constitutes academic misconduct
* provide practical ideas for how to avoid such misconduct
* bust myths around the roles and power software programmes have.

All elements of the resource have been carefully researched and thought-through in view of pedagogical, logistical and practical considerations. We therefore recommend you us the online module in full.

However, such a generic resource cannot account for discipline-specific deviations or programme-related contextualisation.

Programme teams are strongly recommended to localise and contextualise this Moodle course by complementing the existing resource in classes with additional, relevant resources and activities whilst maintaining the educational and supportive spirit of the module.

## When to use the Moodle course

Students should be encouraged to complete the online component in Term 1 before their first assignment and after their first draft.

A session with generic draft feedback or instructions on how to complete the assignment would also be a great opportunity to discuss individual elements of the online component as relevant for the module/programme.

Throughout the online module there are key areas, where students can print their answers. This is so that they may record their answers for personal, future reference, or so that they may bring their responses into a face-to-face session for further work on that particular area.

However, if you wish to record or discuss sections where there is no in-built print-button, there is an option to print the screen, using one of the following options:

1. Take advantage of a screen capture tool like the Screen Capture built into Firefox (accessible via the right click menu) or independent tools such as ‘Awesome Screenshot Plus’ (developed by Diigo) which works in Firefox and Chrome.
2. Use the mouse ‘right click’ for options.
   * 1. In Chrome use the “Print…” option and select to save to PDF or another option.
     2. In Firefox use “Take a Screenshot” the built in Screen Capture.
3. Use ‘Print Screen’ or PrtScrn button on your keypad to capture a copy of whole screen and then paste this into a word or other text document. This method captures your whole computer screen and embeds an image into a word document, but this is less effective.

## How to support the online module in the classroom: ideas for further exploration

We go through each section, or screen, of the Moodle course and some suggestions for classroom activities to support them.

### Introduction to academic integrity and academic misconduct (Screen 1)

This section is a reflective activity aimed at providing insights into how academic misconduct is viewed in different sectors and that academic integrity is not always easily achieved, given the specific environments individuals learn and work in.

Ideas for further discussion and exploration of this topic include:

#### Discussing academic misconduct

Students should know that as staff members we understand about pressures and time management concerns and that we empathise with having grown accustomed to different forms of learning and knowledge production.

At the same time, a discussion is a good opportunity to outline that we do not want to encourage academic misconduct and that therefore rethinking and relearning are required.

#### Using the reflection questions in discussions

Another discussion could be based around students' experiences and reflections, although at this stage it is not recommended students have to share their actual reflections, as they are rather personal.

Students could be encouraged to bring the print-outs of their reflections to the sessions, so that they can draw upon them for the discussion in class.

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### Learning about academic integrity and academic misconduct (Screen 2)

This screen contains two activities:

1. To learn about the different building blocks that make up the entire module.
2. To create a hierarchy of those building blocks, which will then more detailed enable action-planning and ways forward.

Ideas for further discussion and exploration of this topic include:

#### Pyramids of priorities from the online activities

Collecting all students' answers will allow you to identify where there are specific gaps and areas of interest across a cohort.

This may set the priority for which activities are pursued in more detail in class or across a programme in the future.

### Forms of academic misconduct (Screen 3)

This screen teaches students about different forms of academic misconduct and plagiarism.

The educational value in this activity is that students start seeing plagiarism is a more multi-faceted issue rather than "cutting and pasting".

The drag and drop activity is contentious and not necessarily clear-cut, because, for example, it is impossible to know if someone has breached academic integrity intentionally or unintentionally.

Ultimately, for the regulations in our academic manual, all forms of plagiarism mentioned in these activities are, and will be, treated as forms of academic misconduct.

#### Answers to the drag and drop activity

As has been stated, the table is deliberately vague and contentious in order to stimulate a debate and enable room for contextualisation for each module. You may want to provide the answers to the activity:

* Paying someone to write an essay for you **= collusion**
* Getting a friend to rewrite parts of your essay **= collusion**
* Downloading an assignment from a web site **= collusion**
* Copying from a friend's essay, assignment or notes **= collusion**
* Asking someone to translate an essay **= collusion, Translation plagiarism**
* Cutting and pasting from assignments or websites **= direct copying**
* Using someone else's spreadsheet **= direct copying**
* Rewriting a paragraph by using synonyms **= paraphrasing**
* Changing a few words only from the original text **= paraphrasing**
* Reusing your own materials and ideas **= self-plagiarism**
* Submitting the same essay for different examinations **= self-plagiarism**
* Translating a text and not crediting the author **= translation plagiarism**
* Forgetting to add the referencing **= unintentional plagiarism**

#### Reinforcing the drag and drop activity in the classroom

In the original workshop we had one activity which formed the basis for the drag and drop activity.

Students (in groups of three or four) build a logical structure of all snippets of paper.

Usually, the structures are quite different from one another and therefore open up a discussion around forms of misconduct and plagiarism.

The sheet needs to be printed and cut up so that students have to find the descriptions of plagiarism types (in lighter colour) to fit the categories (in darker colour). There are some overlapping areas, but that is fine. Ultimately, all of these activities constitute plagiarism and are punishable offences.

#### Defining the difference between collaboration and collusion

In some modules, assignments will be set in such a way that students will have to collaborate.

Clarifying the difference between collaboration and collusion is therefore crucial.

It is also important to remind students, that what is true for one module does not necessarily apply in another.

Students need to check with each individual module leader what the rules are around collaboration and collusion, in particular.

### Guidance to referencing (Screen 4)

The scope of this module does not allow for providing academic writing skills, study skills and referencing skills.

In this section students are therefore asked to engage with relevant resources where they may find help and support with academic writing skills, study skills and referencing skills.

The primary sources currently are:

#### Library services

* [LibrarySkills @ UCL](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/libraryskills-ucl) Provides face-to-face and online training and support for library skills and information literacy development.
* [Subject support in the library](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/subject-support-library) Support for subjects, including guidance about classification schemes, book and journal collections, online resources, AV material, other libraries and training they provide.
* [Research Support](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/research-support) Provides a number of services and resources to assist UCL students and staff with research projects.
* [Skills in Seconds](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/libraryskills-ucl/skills-seconds) A series of short films introducing print and online resources available from UCL Library Services.
* [Guides and e-learning](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/libraryskills-ucl/guides-and-elearning) Guides and online support material to provide introductory information to enable staff and students to use UCL's libraries and online resources.

#### Online learning

* [Plagiarism and Academic Writing for Students](https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/enrol/index.php?id=34) This is a moodle course that is accessible via the "student help" tab on the top of the moodle home page, and contains information about referencing, Turnitin, academic skills etc.

#### Workshops and short courses

* [Academic Communication Centre](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/languages-international-education/academic-communication-centre) Shows what support is available to students in each faculty.
* [Centre for Languages and International Education (CLIE)](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/languages-international-education/) Offers a range of degree preparation and foundation courses as well as courses in academic English, for example.
* [Academic Writing Centre](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/centres/academic-writing-centre) Provides support **for UCL Institute of Education (IOE) students** in the form of workshops and short courses (face to face and online), one-to-one tutorials (face to face, Skype or phone), online discussion forums, and online resources. Sessions and resources are specifically designed to support Academic Writing in Education studies.
* [Students' Union UCL](http://studentsunionucl.org/help-and-advice/academic-support) Academic advice guides to help students understand UCL’s policies and procedures.

#### Sharing the resources

Students should be asked to share their print-out, either via Moodle or in a session.

If every student finds one or two relevant resources to be used, as a module team you will have a comprehensive bank of resources.

This is then your opportunity to further highlight resources that may be available specifically for your module or your discipline, either within or outside of the UCL spaces.

#### Teaching about accessing information

This activity is also a good starting point to teach students about how to access the resources available at UCL.

Many students may not be aware of how they can access e-journals, e-books, magazine subscriptions etc. free of charge through the UCL library services and via their student account details.

### Misconduct policy (Screen 5)

This section aims to support students' understanding of and engagement with [UCL’s misconduct policy](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/sites/academic-manual/files/section_9_student_academic_misconduct_procedure_2019-20.pdf), as in many cases, students are not necessarily aware of the actual policies and consequences.

At the same time, this activity helps understand that Turnitin is merely a tool to support detection of plagiarism but is not a decision-maker.

This activity should be discussed in a session in order to provide the back stories to these two cases and to ensure students understand that Turnitin is not the decision-maker.

#### Case 1

This is a case of plagiarism, where the student had cut and pasted text from several internet sources.

This was a case of bad time-management and rushing to get "something" submitted.

The case came to an internal panel and student was found guilty of academic misconduct.

#### Case 2

This is a case where, for unknown reasons, we experienced a technical glitch with the Turnitin repository.

The student had submitted a draft to their tutor, which had been remembered in the Turnitin repository. So, when the student submitted the final version two months later, the system compared this final version against the student's own draft. This report shows that there had been 33% difference between the draft and the final.

#### Discussing the use of Turnitin

These two cases may also be used as a starting point for a discussion around Turnitin.

There are many variables we need to consider, but ultimately, Turnitin is not a decision-maker; it is merely a tool we can use to help identify potential plagiarism.

However, students may also use Turnitin as a tool. They can generate their own reports via the [Plagiarism and Academic Writing Moodle course](https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/enrol/index.php?id=34) available through the Student help tab.

Working through a Turnitin report on a draft section may help students identify passages, where they have forgotten to add a reference.

#### Discussing academic misconduct policies

This activity can also be used as a stimulus for a discussion around the academic misconduct policy and potential consequences should someone be found guilty.

Academic misconduct is taken seriously, as this is about ensuring qualities and standards that are meaningful. There have been cases where postgraduate students were not able to complete their master's courses due to this.

[Pages 4-6 of the Academic misconduct policy](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/sites/academic-manual/files/section_9_student_academic_misconduct_procedure_2019-20.pdf) are particularly helpful as a basis for this discussion.

### Ways of writing to prevent plagiarism (Screen 6)

This screen is designed to highlight that our ways of working may put us at risk of academic misconduct.

Many students will use specific routines for how they summarise texts, and that will potentially impact their writing styles and voices.

Most forms of unintentional plagiarism actually happen because students are not aware that they inadvertently copy from the texts lying open in front them for perusing.

#### Introducing different ways of working

Using the given examples of reading/writing processes, you may want to ask students to follow a specific process or way of working for formative tasks.

Initially, there will be resistance to that, as we all hate changing our routines, but sometimes bringing students out of that comfort zone may be needed.

#### The Jeremy Bentham activity

The "Jeremy Bentham" activity from the original plagiarism workshop helps students to understand how they work.

Students are asked to provide a 30-50 word summary of a text (in our case, the Jeremy Bentham text which you can download for printing).

Once every student has started writing, you ask everyone to put their pens down and to look at how they have tackled this task.

Some students will have underlined or highlighted phrases, others will have annotated the text, others will have turned over the page.

This activity is usually quite a powerful way to demonstrate different ways of working and to emphasise that one's routine way of working may not necessarily be the best.

### Plagiarism detection (Screen 7)

This screen is another opportunity to demonstrate that academic writing is more than merely screening for plagiarism and similarities, as there are subtleties in voices and writing styles.

#### Teaching writing styles and disciplinary conventions

The way references are included, how arguments are written and entire essays or articles are structured is strongly shaped by disciplinary conventions.

Therefore, this activity (“plagiarism detection” in the online module) can be used to work on, and with, writing conventions in disciplines.

You may want to refer students back to screen 4 and the long list of resources for help with academic writing.

### Contract cheating and essay mills (Screen 8)

On this screen students are asked to reflect on how to deal with emails or advertising coming from companies specialising in contract cheating and writing assignments for payment.

#### Discussing ethics and academic integrity

This online task should stimulate a broader discussion on ethics and academic integrity.

This could be part of an introductory or conclusion lecture on a programme or course.

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### Summary of learning (Screen 9)

This final activity is merely an attempt to reiterate that students need to check with module leaders about the contextualised rules and regulations and that ultimately, all forms of cheating may incur punishment.

Some of the statements are ambiguous, but the immediate feedback provided in Moodle should help.

#### Answers to the true or false activity and using it in the classroom

You may want to share some answers with the students. Although they receive feedback in Moodle, this can be an ambiguous topic and better discussed in class.

| **Statement** | **True** | **False** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Copying from others is a form of misconduct. | X |  |
| If you have plagiarised unintentionally it is not a problem. |  | X |
| Not referencing some ideas is not so serious. |  | X |
| Plagiarism is passing off information as your own. | X |  |
| Plagiarism is stealing ideas and thoughts from someone else. | X |  |
| Plagiarism is theft and as such a serious matter. | X |  |
| Plagiarism is using other people's data without giving them credit. | X |  |
| Punishment for plagiarism means you have to resubmit your work without copying. |  | X |
| Using someone else's ideas is not the same as copying text word by word. |  | X |
| Working together with someone else is not a form of plagiarism. |  | X |

You can print the above answers from the workshop resources in the OER and use this hard-copy to reiterate some key issues and clarify contentious points in the classroom.

* Ask the students to fill in the form individually.
* Once everyone has finished read out the sentences one by one and get your students to respond by shouting out their answers together as a choir.
* As there are some ambiguous statements within the set, there will be mixed answers, which will provide an opportunity for discussion and clarification.

## Resources

### Plagiarism

Baugh, J., Kovacs, P., & Davis, G. (2012). Does the computer programming student understand what constitutes plagiarism. *Issues in Information Systems*, *13*(2), 138-145.

Helgesson, G., & Eriksson, S. (2015). Plagiarism in research. *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy*, *18*(1), 91-101.

Hollins, T. J., Lange, N., Dennis, I., & Longmore, C. A. (2016). Social influences on unconscious plagiarism and anti-plagiarism. *Memory*, *24*(7), 884-902.

Williams, K., & Davis, M. (2017). *Referencing and understanding plagiarism*. Macmillan International Higher Education.

Yadav, S., Rawal, G., & Baxi, M. (2016). Plagiarism-A serious scientific misconduct. *International Journal of Health Sciences and Research*, *6*(2), 364-366.

Zhang, Y. H. H. (2016). *Against Plagiarism: A Guide for Editors and Authors.* Switzerland: Springer.

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### Contract cheating

Curtis, G. J., & Clare, J. (2017). How prevalent is contract cheating and to what extent are students repeat offenders?. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *15*(2), 115-124.

Dawson, P., & Sutherland-Smith, W. (2018). Can markers detect contract cheating? Results from a pilot study. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *43*(2), 286-293.

Lancaster, T., & Clarke, R. (2015). Contract cheating: the outsourcing of assessed student work. *Handbook of Academic Integrity*, 1-14.

Lancaster, T., Robins, A., & Fincher, S. (2019) Assessment and Plagiarism. In: Fincher, Sally and Robins, Anthony (eds.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Computing Education Research*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, pp. 414-444.

Rowland, S., Slade, C., Wong, K. S., & Whiting, B. (2018). ‘Just turn to us’: the persuasive features of contract cheating websites. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *43*(4), 652-665.

### Practical toolkits and workshop materials

Brown, N. & Janssen, R. (2019). Workshop materials for the preventing plagiarism workshop: https://open-education-repository.ucl.ac.uk//567/

Brown, N., & Janssen, R. (2017). Preventing plagiarism and fostering academic integrity: A practical approach. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, *5*(3), 102-109: [h](https://jpaap.napier.ac.uk/index.php/JPAAP/article/view/245/pdf)

Gallant, T. B., George, V., Jamieson, M., Kanani, M., Lang, C., Moriarty, C., & Usdansky, M. (2016). Institutional Toolkit to Combat Contract Cheating

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