

Academic Policy

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

1. Introduction

1.1 Academic Honesty, Cheating, and Plagiarism

La Trobe University regards academic honesty as the foundation of teaching, learning, and research and scholarship. It requires its academic staff and students to observe the highest ethical standards in all aspects of academic work. The University demonstrates its commitment to these values by awarding due credit for honestly conducted scholarly work, and by penalising academic dishonesty and all forms of cheating.

At La Trobe University:

- it is the responsibility of the academic staff to conduct research and scholarship according to ethical standards of scholarship, and to teach their students ethical learning and research and scholarship practices;
- it is the responsibility of the students to acquire a clear understanding of how to avoid unethical practices, and to employ this knowledge in their work submitted for assessment.

Academic staff or students who engage in fraudulent or unethical research and scholarship practices will become subject to the disciplinary procedures of the University, as will students who cheat in tests, examinations, essays, or any other assessable work, or conspire with others to procure such a result.

1.2 Plagiarism

One form of academic cheating is *plagiarism*, the reproducing of someone else's words, ideas or findings and presenting them as one's own without proper acknowledgment.

There are many forms of plagiarism, including the following:

- (a) direct copying of sentences, paragraphs or other extracts from someone else's published work (including on the Internet and in software) without acknowledging the source;
- (b) paraphrasing someone else's words without acknowledging the source;

- (c) using facts and information derived from a source without acknowledging it;
- (d) using ideas directly derived from an identifiable author without acknowledging the source;
- (e) producing assignments which should be the student's own independent work in collaboration with and/or using the work of other people (e.g. a student or tutor).

Assisting another person to plagiarise material may be punished as severely as is plagiarism itself. Assisting plagiarism may involve a student lending work (or by posting it on the Internet for sale) which is intended for submission for assessment, or which has already been submitted, so that it can be copied and handed in by another student as that student's own work.

Students may find it helpful to discuss assignments with other students and their tutors. The University encourages students to communicate with one another in constructive ways about the learning process. Students may choose to assist each other, for example in discussing the approaches that might be taken to assignment topics, or helping with the availability of reading materials. They should, however, write their assignments independently, except when they are asked to work on a project as a member of a group which is to submit a joint report, as equal contributors. In this case, except where the final written work consists of sections for which particular individuals take sole responsibility, the group as a whole assumes responsibility for it and the proper acknowledgment of any use made of the words or ideas of people outside the group.

The vigilance of the University in regard to plagiarism is in response to the perceived growing incidence of plagiarism. The recommended penalties reflect the value the University places on academic honesty and how seriously it regards plagiarism offences. The University will protect its reputation for academic integrity by ensuring that serious and repeat offenders, who wish to obtain an unfair advantage through cheating, are given penalties proportionate to the offences committed.

2. Definitions

Minor Offences are limited instances of academic misconduct for example, breaches in referencing/ collaboration/contravening examination rules which in the case of first year students are normally due to inexperience/ lack of understanding and could be seen as being predictable. In respect of later year students, the actions or omissions would typically be isolated and not systematic or significant.

Serious Offences are those where the extent, magnitude, repetitiveness and/or blatancy of the misconduct for example referencing/ collaboration/contravening examination rules are significant and there is:

- a clear intention to obtain an unfair academic advantage whether the advantage occurs or not; or
- a clear disregard of the University's requirements for academic honesty; or
- negligence in respect of submitted work which is inconsistent with the experience of the student.

3. Policy

3.1 Responsibility of the University

The University recognises its obligation to educate students in the definition, identification and avoidance of plagiarism. As an international university it acknowledges that different cultures have diverse attitudes to scholarly authority and originality. Students entering the University will be informed clearly of the academic standards expected in courses and units, and the precise requirements of referencing that apply in particular disciplines.

The following practices, which constitute the strategy to reduce the incidence of plagiarism as part of its commitment to quality education, will be observed uniformly across all faculties of the University:

- () the University will ensure that all students are made aware of its policy on plagiarism through mandatory faculty, course or subject-based sessions on plagiarism and its avoidance for all commencing students;
- () there will be particular emphasis in the first year of undergraduate study on teaching students the skills they need to avoid plagiarism;
- () students will be informed that rigorous standards in referencing and acknowledgment of sources will be required in their academic work, and that these standards and practices could differ from those they may have acquired previously in secondary schooling.

This will be achieved by:

- each Program, Department and/or School producing and distributing to all students enrolled in a given year clear written guidelines regarding the system(s) of referencing that will be required of students submitting assignments;

- students will be advised on effective methods of academic writing, particularly the requirements in quoting, summarising, and paraphrasing the sources they use; and
- attention will be devoted to the role of bibliographies or reference lists, and how use of these does not absolve the student from the duty of full referencing in essays.

This will form part of first-year training of students in how to analyse issues, think critically, synthesise ideas, use sources, and incorporate evidence into their written assignments;

- () academic staff will ensure that their course and unit guides are prepared according to the same high standards of referencing that they demand of students;
- () students will be taught why plagiarism is an unethical practice. The rationale for the severity of penalties applied to serious cases will be made clear to them;
- () academic staff will be trained by the University in the specifics of this aspect of their teaching, and they will equip students with the necessary resources to enable them to avoid plagiarism;
- () academic staff will ensure that assessment requirements in unit guides are clearly stated, and bring them clearly to students' attention;
- () academic staff will ensure that student workloads are commensurate with unit credit point values (so that students are not tempted to plagiarise or cheat in order to meet unduly heavy workload demands);
- (i) academic staff will be required to vary from year to year the major assessment tasks, essay topics and examinations they set in units;
- (j) faculty, school, departmental or program guides/assignment manuals will contain the approved definition of plagiarism and its forms, and a warning that the University will use all means at its disposal to detect and punish serious cases of plagiarism. The measures employed by the University to detect plagiarism will be explained to students;
- () every unit guide will contain a reference to the definition of plagiarism, its forms, and the measures the University is using to reduce its incidence;

- () warning about the penalties that may be imposed for plagiarism will be published in the University Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks, in guides for Postgraduate Students, and on department/program, school and faculty noticeboards and web-sites;
- (m) academic staff will only accept work for assessment where a signed statement of authorship is attached by the student, together with consent that their work may be copied and transmitted by the University for the detection of plagiarism. Any other use or disclosure will require the consent of the student concerned unless the use or disclosure is in accordance with applicable privacy legislation; and
- (n) academic staff will be trained in the procedure of referring the work of students for electronic analysis for the detection of plagiarism.

3.2 Responsibility of the Student

Students have a responsibility to:

- () observe in all respects the ethical approaches to learning that the University fosters;
- (a) declare all printed, electronic, graphs, works of art, and other kinds of sources in their work submitted for assessment, from which they obtain material or ideas;
- (a) do this in ways approved by the discipline, school and faculty in which the assignment is set, for example through footnotes, endnotes, textual references or other devices;
- (a) consult and use the guides and information provided by the University to instruct them in the avoidance of plagiarism;
- (a) take part in the sessions on plagiarism avoidance and learning programs provided by the University to enhance their writing and analytical skills, which will contribute to the diminution of plagiarism in their work;
- (a) seek individual instruction from staff of Language and Academic Skills Units when they are counselled to do so;

- (g) submit work for assessment with the appropriate statement of authorship, the consent to copying and transmission for electronic analysis for the detection of plagiarism, and declaration that the plagiarism avoidance advice issued for the unit or course has been read;
- (h) retain copies of all assignments they submit for assessment;
- (i) ensure that they do not knowingly or carelessly make their work available to other students in any form; and
- (j) consult with staff when in doubt about any matter where plagiarism is or may be involved.

3.3 The University's Strategy for Minimising Plagiarism

In addition to providing training for both academic staff and students in the avoidance of plagiarism as part of its ethical approach to teaching and learning and the promotion of quality in tertiary education, the University will:

- (a) provide students and academic staff access to effective text matching software, and advice on how to use it;
- (b) ensure Departments/Schools run confidential tests through this software for a number of units per semester per faculty as a quality control measure;
- (c) maintain a plagiarism and academic misconduct database, as approved by Academic Board, incorporating only cases where a penalty is applied. Information contained in the database must be collected, maintained and used in accordance with applicable privacy legislation;
- (c) make the information from this database available to Heads of Schools and Faculty Academic Misconduct Committees when it is proposed to apply a penalty. Disclosure of this information is not otherwise permitted without the individual's consent unless the disclosure is in accordance with applicable privacy legislation;
- (e) require the University Academic Committee to offer advice and guidance to the Faculties in response to their reports on the quality of their management of plagiarism and academic dishonesty;
- (f) publicise that the University is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic honesty in its units and courses;

- (g) share its statistical data on serious offences, in a way that does not identify any individuals, on a confidential basis with other Australian universities which undertake to cooperate in plagiarism detection and reduction;
- (c) cooperate with administrative and academic staff of other institutions with the view to implementing best practice in controlling plagiarism; and
- (i) monitor the activities of the Faculty Academic Misconduct Committees, the Higher Degrees Academic Misconduct Committee and the Academic Misconduct Review Committee:
 - Faculty Academic Misconduct Committees will report annually in May through the Faculty Boards copied to the Director, Academic Services on the number, kinds and outcomes of cases that have occurred in the previous year. The report may include recommendations on academic misconduct and procedures;
 - The Higher Degrees Academic Misconduct Committee will report annually in May through the Higher Degrees (Research) Committee copied to the Director, Research and Graduate Studies Office on the proceedings of the Committee;
 - The Academic Misconduct Review Committee will report annually in May to the Director, Academic Services on the proceedings of the Committee in the case of coursework students and to the Director, Research and Graduate Studies Office in the case of research students;
 - The Director, Academic Services will provide a consolidated report annually in June on academic misconduct outcomes to the University Academic Committee including any recommendations on academic misconduct, procedures and the effectiveness of relevant committees;
 - The Director, Research and Graduate Studies Office will provide a report annually in June on academic misconduct outcomes involving higher degree research students to the University Higher Degrees Committee (Research) including any recommendations on academic misconduct, procedures and the effectiveness of relevant committees
- (j) the University Academic Committee and Higher Degrees Committee (Research) will conduct an on-going review of the University's Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures in the light of the annual reports provided in section (i) above.

4. Procedures

4.1 Guidelines for detecting and reporting student academic misconduct

Refer to the Academic Misconduct Administrative Guidelines for a range of example scenarios and suggested penalties.

5. Cross References

5.1 Related University Governing Documents

La Trobe University Regulations

R16.2 Student Discipline and Misconduct Academic Misconduct

R21.12 Examinations and Assessment

5.2 Appointment of Committees to hear cases of Academic Misconduct

Refer to Regulation 16.2 and Regulation 21.12 for the rules governing the appointment, composition, processes and procedures of Faculty Academic Review Committees, the Higher Degrees Academic Misconduct Committee and the Academic Misconduct Review Committee.

6. Approval

Approved by Council
June 2007

7. Communication

This policy is located in the Academic Services Manual and is also available on the Policy website at <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/XXXXX/>

8. Revision History

8.1 The implementation of the latest version of this policy supersedes all previous versions and decisions made by the approving body in relation to this policy.

8.2 Table of Revision History

Date	Revision Number	Change	Reference Sections	Authority
March 1996 - Academic Board – AB96/52	1.0	Development of Policy	All	Academic Board
18.02.2004 - Academic Board – AB04/16	2.0	Revision of Policy	All	Academic Board
March 2007	3.0	Revision of Policy	All	Academic Board

8.3 Review Schedule

- First review: One year after approval.
- Subsequent reviews: Three years after the previous review.