



# The University of Sydney

## Draft Academic Board Resolution

### Academic Honesty in Coursework

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## Part 1 - Preliminary

### 1. Commencement

These Resolutions commence on 1 January 2002.

### 2. Purpose

**The purpose of this document is:**

- (1) to set out the principles underpinning the University's approach to academic honesty in coursework;
- (2) to identify responsibilities for ensuring that the principles of academic honesty in coursework are implemented;
- (3) to be a resource document relating to academic honesty in coursework; and
- (4) to be a resource document containing the procedures relating to academic honesty in coursework, pursuant to Senate rules and regulations, Academic Board policies.

### 3. Authority

The University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000 (Division 1, 5(4)) requires the Academic Board to establish policies for assessment and examination of coursework.

### 4. Revision

This document is maintained by the Academic Board in consultation with the Registrar and is published by the Academic Board.

### 5. Dictionary

In this document:

**Assessment** means evaluation of a student's performance by written/oral examination, assignments, presentation, theses, etc.

**Award course** means a formally approved program of study which can lead to an academic award granted by the University.

**Coursework award course** means an award course not designated as a research award course. While the program of study in a coursework award course may include a component of original, supervised research, other forms of instruction and learning normally will be dominant. All undergraduate award courses are coursework award courses.

**Dean** means the dean of a faculty or the director or principal of an academic college, or chairperson of a board of studies.

**Department or school** means the academic unit which has responsibility for the relevant unit of study.

**Examiner** means the person/s assessing either the written/oral examination, coursework assignments, presentations, theses etc of a student or students.

**Faculty** means a faculty, college board or the Australian Graduate School Of Management Limited, as established in each case by its constitution, or, where applicable, a board of studies. Faculties are responsible for award courses, and in this document the term refers to the faculty responsible for the award course concerned.

**Groupwork** means a formally established project to be conducted by a number of students in common, resulting in a single piece of assessment or a number of associated pieces of assessment.

**Head of Department or School** means the head of the academic unit which has responsibility for the relevant unit of study, or equivalent program leader.

**Legitimate co-operation** means any constructive educational and intellectual practice that aims to facilitate optimal learning outcomes through interaction between students.

**Plagiarism** means knowingly presenting another person's ideas, findings or work as one's own by copying or reproducing them without due acknowledgement of the source.

**Recycling** means the submission for assessment of one's own work, or of work which is substantially the same, which has previously been counted towards the satisfactory completion of another unit of study, and credited towards a university degree, and where the examiner has not been informed that the student has already received credit for that work.

**Student** means a person enrolled as a candidate for an award course or unit of study.

**Unit of study or unit** means a stand-alone component of an award course. Each unit of study is the responsibility of a department.

## 6. Related Documents

These Academic Board Resolutions refer to, or should be read in conjunction with, the following:

- (1) University of Sydney By-laws 1999;
- (2) University of Sydney (Amendment Act) Rule (as amended);
- (3) Delegations of Authority: Academic Functions;
- (4) Academic Board Resolution: *Assessment and Examination of Coursework*;
- (5) Academic Board Resolution: *The Management and Evaluation of Teaching*;
- (6) Resolutions of the Senate: *Student Appeals against Academic Decisions*;
- (7) Academic Board Resolution: *Student Appeals against Academic Decisions: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Course Awards*;

- (8) Academic Board Resolution: *Student Appeals against Academic Decisions: Postgraduate Research Awards*
- (9) Research Code of Conduct

## Part 2 – Principles of Academic Honesty

### 1. Introduction

Academic honesty is a core value of the University of Sydney. The University is committed to the basic academic right that students receive due credit for work submitted for assessment. Integral to this is the notion that it is clearly unfair for students to submit work for assessment that dishonestly represents the work of others as their own. Such activity represents a form of fraud.

### 2. Plagiarism and academic honesty

- (1) Plagiarism can be broadly defined as knowingly presenting another person's ideas, findings or work as one's own by copying or reproducing the work without due acknowledgment of the source.  
Plagiarism may take many forms. The most common form of plagiarism is where a student presents written work, including sentences, paragraphs or longer extracts from published work without attribution of its source.  
Work submitted for assessment may also be regarded as plagiarised where significant portions of an assignment have been reproduced from the work of another student, since this exceeds the boundaries of legitimate co-operation.
- (2) Legitimate co-operation can be defined as any constructive educational and intellectual practice that aims to facilitate optimal learning outcomes through interaction between students.  
Typical examples of these practices may include the researching and writing of joint projects/written works/tutorial papers; discussion of general themes and concepts; interpretation of assessment criteria; informal study/discussion groups; strengthening and development of academic writing skills through peer assistance.  
Legitimate co-operation is based on the principle that producing the work remains the independent responsibility of the student (or group of students where a joint project is undertaken), while recognising the educational value of interaction between students.
- (3) Plagiarism is always unacceptable in academic work but may not necessarily involve dishonest intent. Some plagiarism occurs when students fail to follow the practices of referencing which are expected in the relevant field of study.  
Plagiarism may also occur when students copy word for word from authors who are regarded as experts not out of dishonesty but out of a fear of paraphrasing or writing in their own words.  
Such students may choose to use the words of the experts because of lack of confidence in their ability or comprehension, or because of language difficulties.
- (4) Plagiarism which represents poor referencing practice or which reflects an unwillingness to use one's own words should be addressed as an educational issue. Students should be counselled about proper referencing practices and the importance of writing in their own words.  
Written work which contains plagiarism should be assessed in accordance with its academic merit, and in appropriate cases may fail the assessment task. This is not a penalty for plagiarism but an evaluation of the merit of the written work in the light of the University's expectations and standards.

- (5) No penalty should be imposed on a student for plagiarism without complying with the procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty outlined in this document.

### **3. Academic dishonesty**

- (1) The University procedures relating to academic dishonesty must be invoked where an examiner considers that the student has knowingly presented another person's ideas, findings or written work as his or her own by copying or reproducing them without due acknowledgement of the source and with intent to deceive the examiner.
- (2) It is reasonable to consider that the student has intended to deceive the examiner where:
- (a) substantial portions of the work submitted for assessment were copied from another student, or from the work of a former student, in a manner which clearly exceeds the boundaries of legitimate co-operation or groupwork;
  - (b) written work contains a substantial body of material copied from published work or available on the Internet without any attribution of its source and in a manner which cannot readily be explained by poor referencing, language difficulties or lack of confidence in using one's own words;
  - (c) there is evidence that the student engaged another person to write the assignment, either partly or wholly, whether for payment or otherwise;
  - (d) there is evidence that the student paid another person to conduct research for the assignment; and/or
  - (e) the student has previously received a formal warning in relation to plagiarism and the plagiarism in the work submitted for assessment cannot be explained by continuing difficulties in understanding the university's requirements for written work.

### **4. Other forms of academic dishonesty**

Other forms of academic dishonesty which should be referred to the head of department/school in accordance with this Resolution include, but are not limited to:

- (1) recycling;
- (2) the engagement of another person to complete an assessment or examination in place of the student, whether for payment or otherwise;
- (3) communication, whether by speaking or some other means, to other candidates during an examination;
- (4) bringing into an examination and concealing forbidden material such as textbooks, notes, calculators or computers;
- (5) attempts to read other student's work during an examination; and/or

- (6) writing an examination or test paper, or consulting with another person about the examination or test, outside the confines of the examination room without permission.

**5. Principles for the dealing with cases of alleged academic dishonesty**

The University's approach to suspected cases of academic dishonesty should be:

- (1) Equitable;
- (2) Consistent;
- (3) Procedurally fair; and
- (4) Timely.

### **Part 3 – Procedures relating to Academic Dishonesty**

#### **1. Introduction**

The aim of this Part is to ensure that faculties have proper regard for ensuring the highest standards of academic honesty. Each faculty must implement both an effective management procedure and a preventative (education & communication) strategy, in regard to academic honesty.

#### **2. Responsibility for dealing with matters of Academic Honesty**

- (1) Issues concerning breaches of academic standards of honesty may be dealt with either through the process of determining academic results in a unit of study, or, in the most serious cases, by invocation of misconduct procedures in accordance with the University of Sydney By-law 1999, Chapter 8 *Student Discipline*.
- (2) In determining the result which a student should receive in a unit of study, the Department or equivalent academic unit may consider not only the results of all work submitted for assessment but also other factors as stipulated in the University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000. This includes compliance with University requirements for academic standards of honesty.
- (3) Failure to comply with the University's standards for academic honesty may lead in appropriate cases to failure in the work submitted for assessment or failure overall in the unit of study or such penalty as is imposed in accordance with the University procedures on student discipline (University of Sydney By-law 1999, Chapter 8).
- (4) In cases other than those in which procedures under Chapter 8 of the University of Sydney By-law 1999 are invoked, decisions about how to respond to cases in which a student has breached academic standards of honesty shall be made by the head of department/school responsible for finalising results in that unit of study.

#### **3. Processes relating to academic honesty**

Faculties should ensure that procedures for considering allegations of academic dishonesty contain the following elements:

- (1) Identification of academic dishonesty
  - (a) Where an examiner detects or is made aware of plagiarism, recycling or irregularities in an assessment and/or examination, the lecturer in charge or unit co-ordinator shall either arrange a consultation with the student or refer the matter to the head of department/school for further action.
  - (b) If the lecturer believes that the student acted without the intention to deceive, or was otherwise not acting dishonestly, the lecturer may:
    - (i) counsel the student by explaining referencing guidelines, providing information concerning plagiarism and referring the student to services for assistance; and/ or
    - (ii) issue a warning about the consequences of breaching University policy on academic honesty.

If a warning is given, a written record of the consultation and outcome should be retained and signed and dated by both the lecturer and the student.

A copy of the record should be

- (i) retained by both the student and the lecturer;
- (ii) recorded on the student file; and
- (iii) forwarded to the head of department/school.

- (c) If the lecturer believes that the student acted with the intention to deceive, or was otherwise acting dishonestly, the matter should be referred immediately to the head of department/school.
- (d) The head of department/school should either refer the matter to the Registrar in accordance with clause 62(1) of the University of Sydney By-law 1999, Chapter 8 *Student Discipline*, or proceed to deal with the issue by interviewing the student in accordance with the procedures below.

(2) Fair Hearing

- (a) In cases other than those in which procedures under Chapter 8 of the University of Sydney By-law 1999 are invoked, the head of department/school must give the student a fair hearing in relation to the concerns about breaches of academic standards of honesty.
- (b) The head of department/school will deal with the matter no later than three (3) weeks from the time that he or she is notified of the alleged breach of academic standards of honesty.
- (c) A student shall be given a reasonable opportunity to know specifically the nature of the allegations concerning the breach of academic standards of honesty, and given a reasonable time in which to prepare a response.
- (d) The student may invite a support person or the relevant student representative to any meeting with the head of department/school.
- (e) The student shall be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard on the allegations of failure to comply with academic standards of honesty.
- (g) The head of department/school will make a decision about the matter within two (2) weeks of the date of meeting or other form of consultation.

(3) Decisions

Taking into account the student's level of experience, reasons for or circumstances relating to the breaching academic standards of honesty and/or previous incidents of such breaches, the head of department/school shall make a determination by either:

- (a) dismissing the case with no further action other than counselling the student;
- (b) issuing a warning;
- (c) requiring the student to resubmit the work for assessment; or to undertake other remedial work;

- (d) requiring the student to undertake another form of assessment in lieu of the assignment in question, such as an unseen examination;
  - (e) applying a fail grade to the work submitted for assessment;
  - (f) applying a fail grade overall in the unit of study; or
  - (g) referring the matter to the Registrar, if the student continues in a denial that there has been a breach of the University's standards of academic honesty or, following the interview, the head of department/school considers that failing the unit of study is insufficient to deal with the matter.
- (4) Record-keeping
- (a) A brief record of the interview shall be made on each matter regardless of outcome. This report shall be in a form designed to record the nature of the incident, attributing factors, evidence, outcome and follow up.
  - (b) A letter outlining the decision and the reasons for the decision shall be sent to the student involved.
- (5) Appeal Process
- (a) Where the student contests the allegation of a breach of academic standards of honesty, and the head of department/school considers that further action should be taken, the appropriate course for the resolution of the allegation is to invoke the procedures under Chapter 8 of the University of Sydney By-law 1999.
  - (b) Appeals against the decision made under Part 3, section 3 (3) of this Resolution must follow the process set down for appeals against academic decisions.
- (6) Review by Faculty Committee
- Once per year, the head of department/school shall give an account of the way in which breaches of academic standards have been dealt with to the Teaching and Learning Committee of the Faculty or its equivalent, or such other committee as is determined by resolution of Faculty. By providing advice to heads of departments/schools, the Committee should endeavour to ensure consistency of approach across the Faculty.

## **Part 4 – Code of practice for Academic Honesty**

### **1. Introduction**

- (1) This Code of Practice sets out the general responsibilities of the University, faculties, departments, and individual teachers to ensure that academic honesty is a core value of the University.
- (2) The following guidelines must be read in conjunction with University regulations for particular degrees, the defined role of faculties/deans and departments/heads of departments, and Academic Board policies on teaching and learning and assessment and examination of coursework.

### **2. Responsibilities and obligations of the University**

The University has a responsibility and obligation to:

- (1) ensure that its policies on academic honesty are publicised to all academic staff and students;
- (2) ensure that its policies on academic honesty are implemented and applied consistently across all faculties;
- (3) promote best practice in the detection of academic dishonesty;
- (4) ensure that academic staff and students understand clearly the different dimensions of academic honesty;
- (2) ensure that fair and well-publicised procedures are applied for the consideration of any cases where students are accused of academic dishonesty.

### **3. Responsibilities and obligations of each Faculty and Board**

Each Faculty and Board has a responsibility and obligation to:

- (1) develop procedures for considering allegations of academic dishonesty which ensure:
  - (a) timeliness of investigation of allegations of academic dishonesty;
  - (b) fair hearing of all allegations of academic dishonesty;
  - (c) accurate reporting;
  - (d) respect for confidentiality; and
  - (e) that all parties are informed of their rights and responsibilities in relation to an investigation of an allegation of academic dishonesty.
- (2) ensure consistent application of policies and practices both at a faculty and department level;

- (3) put in place and maintain appropriate procedures to oversee and monitor departmental implementation of University and faculty policies on academic honesty;
- (4) reinforce both student and staff awareness of their responsibilities in the area of academic honesty including a statement of University and faculty policies in appropriate publications.
- (5) communicate the academic honesty Resolution to all teaching staff to guide staff in their role in:
  - (a) the detection of academic dishonesty; and
  - (c) the process governing academic dishonesty including information regarding the referral process for allegations of academic dishonesty and the process of management (steps and outcomes).
- (6) incorporate into its orientation of new students, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, a program to inform students of good academic practice in regard to their academic performance.
- (7) design and deliver an appropriate program of communication to first year students regarding their obligations for meeting the requirements of academic honesty in all facets of their academic performance.

#### **4. Responsibilities and obligations of each department and school**

Departments and schools have a responsibility and obligation to:

- (1) inform students of their requirements by providing a departmental style guide (or guides) for the presentation of assignments. This (or these) must at least set down the styles of writing appropriate for different tasks and the form(s) of referencing demanded for each task;
- (2) ensure that all academic staff are aware of the need to introduce and reinforce, from the start, student understanding of the professional and academic skills demanded by the discipline at all levels;
- (3) ensure that all academic staff are aware of the appropriate sources of assistance for students seeking to develop their skills in academic writing;
- (4) incorporate material into first year courses that will aid students to understand what academic honesty means;
- (5) put in all appropriate public documents such as departmental handbooks a statement which:
  - (a) states the University definition of plagiarism and gives examples relevant to the discipline;
  - (b) makes clear that plagiarism is unacceptable;
  - (c) explains the process of dealing with complaints of academic dishonesty;

- (d) provides support for students in improving their skills in the preparation and presentation of all assignments;
- (e) provides clear guidelines on group work, especially concerning assessment and division of tasks among group members;
- (f) implements appropriate security practices for submission and return of assignments;
- (g) provides clear guidelines outlining where legitimate co-operation is encouraged and where it is prohibited; and
- (h) provides clear procedures for monitoring groupwork by academic staff, to ensure fair assessment.

## **5. Responsibilities and obligations of academic staff**

Academic staff have a responsibility and obligation to:

- (1) know the policies of the University, the faculty, and the department with respect to academic honesty including plagiarism, co-operation and groupwork, and to apply them consistently;
- (2) be aware of and responsive to different cultural backgrounds of students, especially in relation to the use of the work of others and to writing skills;
- (3) incorporate the principles of academic honesty into course outlines and assessment criteria;
- (4) apply appropriate referencing styles/conventions for all assessment tasks and be consistent regarding referencing styles across tasks;
- (5) provide feedback and consultation to students which identifies gaps in learning and knowledge skills and refer students to appropriate sources of assistance to improve their skills;
- (6) provide students with early notification and fair warning if they believe any individual or group may be at risk of breaching guidelines relating to plagiarism, groupwork and co-operation;
- (7) provide clear written instructions on the level of co-operation permitted within each assessment component.

## **6. Responsibilities and rights of students**

Students have a responsibility to:

- (1) act in accordance with the principles of academic honesty as set out in this Resolution in the preparation, conduct and submission of academic work;
- (2) become familiar with the academic writing expectations in their particular disciplines, subjects and courses of study;

- (3) seek assistance from appropriate sources with any academic writing areas where they are aware they need more knowledge and skills;
- (4) retain a copy of all assignments submitted.

Students have a right to:

- (1) be informed of the Resolution and policies of the University, the faculty, and the department with respect to academic honesty including plagiarism, co-operation and groupwork;
- (2) gain easy access to plain English information on these issues via publications which must be available to every student;
- (3) be provided with clear guidelines on academic styles required in each department/subject;
- (4) expect consistent application of policies and practices both at a faculty and department level;
- (5) receive practical comments which assist them to review their work;
- (6) expect early notification or fair warning in the case where an academic believes a student or group of students may be at risk of breaching guidelines relating to plagiarism, groupwork and co-operation;
- (7) participate in appropriate learning experiences which are offered in order to improve their competency in writing and study skills, understanding of the requirements of groupwork, and development of personal attributes, in particular, ethical behaviour.
- (8) expect a consistent definition of academic honesty and consistent application of procedures for dealing with suspected academic dishonesty across the University;
- (9) expect explicit referencing styles within each department and consistency across tasks. (NB: some departments may sanction only one referencing style/convention, others may sanction several);
- (10) expect clear guidelines relating to all aspects of groupwork;
- (11) expect clear assessment information in each course outline, especially concerning which components are individual and which are collective;
- (12) expect clear procedures for monitoring groupwork by academic staff, to ensure fair assessment;
- (13) expect clear written instructions on the level of co-operation permitted within each assessment component.