



# Is it plagiarism?

## Teaching notes to accompany scenario slides

### 1.1 Synopsis

This session is intended to develop student understanding of academic misconduct and plagiarism (which might be used conterminously) and to develop confidence in understanding permissible and non-permissible activities. 45 minutes is the recommended time for the session and it is largely dependent on group discussion. The session leader should stimulate discussion through questions (see **1.5**) which can then be debated between students. Ultimately, students should be able to understand how to avoid different aspects of academic misconduct/plagiarism and share practices as a group

### 1.2 Target group

These scenarios are aimed at teaching undergraduates what constitutes plagiarism and academic misconduct. Can be used for international students studying at an undergraduate level too.

### 1.3 Learning objectives

1. To understand the terms 'academic misconduct' and 'plagiarism'
2. To consider the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable academic conduct
3. To dispel myths around plagiarism and academic misconduct
4. To raise awareness and understanding of the consequences of academic misconduct and plagiarism
5. To consider techniques that can be used to avoid intentional or unintentional plagiarism

### 1.4 Teaching strategy

1. **Opening -**
  - a. Begin with an open discussion on individual definitions of plagiarism, for instance, 'what do we know about the word plagiarism?' This should stimulate discussion in an open forum about concepts and ideas associated with the word.
  - b. Ask all participants to rate how they are with the terms 'plagiarism' and 'academic misconduct' on a scale of 1-5 (1 = not at all – 5 = very familiar) and ask them to record this.
2. **Main discussion -**

- a. Divide participants into groups and ask them to look at the scenarios and discuss if the scenario constitutes plagiarism/academic misconduct and why. Allow 15 minutes for discussion around the cases and then go through the scenarios as a group, allowing individuals to feedback. Use the discussion questions in **1.5** to guide debate and stimulate responses.

### 3. Closing -

- a. Facilitate an open discussion about the risks of academic misconduct and plagiarising, as well as the methods to overcome this (guidance notes in **2.1**). Emphasis should be given to the APA Referencing style and the different modes of support available at Marjon, including the Marjon Study Skills service.
- b. To conclude the session, ask students how comfortable or confident they feel about the terms 'academic misconduct' and 'plagiarism', using the same 1-5 scale in **1.4.1a**.

## 1.5 Questions and information for discussion

### 1.5.1. Scenario One

- Is this plagiarism/academic misconduct? Justify your answer.
- Are there any risks involved in sharing readings?
- Imagine Sarah and Beckie swapped notes for the readings. Is this plagiarism?
- What could happen if Sarah and Beckie swapped notes? Are there any potential risks?

Discussion should revolve around to what level of collaboration is acceptable before actions become unauthorised collusion. Sharing readings is not plagiarism. It is in fact good academic practice to share knowledge and research. However, if an annotated journal article was shared, then this could potentially lead to plagiarism, as there is the possibility for set phrases or wording used by one person to be remembered (intentionally, or unintentionally) by another and then used in their own work. Therefore, it is not advisable to share notes or annotated texts.

### 1.5.2. Scenario Two

- Is this plagiarism/academic misconduct? Why?
- What if Poppy showed Jacob how to do the drawing and Jacob copied it on to his work?
- What if Poppy talked Jacob through the drawing and didn't pick up a pencil?
- What if Poppy showed Jacob a version in a book to help Jacob with his own drawing?
- How could Jacob overcome this obstacle with academic integrity?

Discussion here should revolve around unauthorised collaboration. Even though Poppy has completed a small percentage of the work, Jacob has not completed his own work in totality. This would be academic misconduct as the assignment is an independent reflection of Jacob's abilities, and Poppy's contribution goes against the terms of the assignment, making it

academic misconduct. Both Poppy and Jacob risk academic misconduct proceedings, even though Poppy is only trying to be helpful.

### **1.5.3 Scenario Three**

- Is this plagiarism/academic misconduct? Why?
- Who would receive the blame for academic misconduct in this scenario?
- Is this unauthorised collusion?
- What does Amir stand to lose if he submits the essay?
- How could Amir overcome this obstacle with academic integrity?

Discussion of this scenario should look at making false claims, including claims that someone has undertaken work when they haven't. In this scenario, Amir risks the whole group facing academic misconduct proceedings by claiming they have contributed when they haven't. Discussion could focus on how to overcome this obstacle, which is common when working towards a group assignment. Solutions such as agreeing to a group work contract or involving a lecturer when someone isn't contributing what they should are acceptable solutions.

### **1.5.4 Scenario Four**

- What should Naomi do? Why?
- What if Naomi falsifies her results? What does this indicate?
- How could Naomi overcome this and avoid academic misconduct?

Discussion of this scenario will look at the consequences of fabricating or falsifying figures in academic work. Discussion should go beyond the procedural consequences of falsification (academic misconduct proceedings) but also into the diminished value of Naomi's research, as it would not be a true reflection of the study. Further discussion might take a look at the ways Naomi can use her results as they are within her work and the value of presenting research exactly as it appears.

### **1.5.5 Scenario Five**

- What can Matt learn from this?
- Did Matt intentionally plagiarise?
- What suggestions would you give to Matt to ensure all of his work is correctly referenced?

Discussion here will look at unintentional plagiarism and how this is counted as plagiarism nonetheless. Discussion may focus on Matt's inattentiveness whilst studying and the value of the study environment on avoiding plagiarism, for example, switching off his phone when writing. Discussion may also look at strategies to ensure that referencing is conducted accurately, for example, the use of technology such as Mendeley to insert citations, highlighting work that must be paraphrased and cited, or referencing as you go. Students might also share their practices for vigilance when paraphrasing and referencing.

### 1.5.6 Scenario Six

- Has Hannah done the right thing?
- What has Hannah done?
- How could Hannah have avoided plagiarism?

Discussion here will consider how Hannah has not completed an original piece of work independently, as editing and proofing contributions to an assignment constitutes unauthorised collaboration. What's more, Hannah might have unintentionally used a third-party author service, masquerading as a proof-reading service. Discussion might be stimulated with regards to the level of support permissible when writing an assignment, and the value of time management when writing an assignment, for example, students building in time for the editing and proof-reading process before submission.

## 2.1 Background reading

### 2.1.1 Definitions of academic misconduct and plagiarism

- **Plagiarism** - Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty, whereby an individual claims ownership of another person's work, ideas, words or intellectual property. Plagiarism can be intentional (deliberately claiming another's work to be your own), or unintentional, through poor or no use of referencing in academic work. In higher education sources must be properly acknowledged and the content accompanied by a critical commentary. This includes visual information, inventions, ideas and words, passed off as your own. It also includes failure to provide citations for paraphrases.
- **Self-plagiarism** - Self-plagiarism is when an individual submits work or part of work that has been previously submitted in fulfilment of another assessment. Each piece of work you submit at University must be original and adhere to the requisite module guidance. Therefore, each piece of work you submit must be original and specific to the given assignment brief.
- **Third party 'authors'** - This refers to work that has been authored in part or in totality by someone other than yourself, for example, an assignment that has been authored by an essay-writing company. This includes sharing work with another student, even if it isn't for financial gain. This is also known as 'ghosting' or 'contract cheating'.
- **Making false claims** - Fabricating or falsifying figures, results, numbers or data, or manipulation of data in order to obtain an unfair academic advantage. This also applies when a person claims to have undertaken work, for example, a research project, but has not.
- **Unauthorised collusion** - Students working together to produce one piece of work, unless explicitly stated as a group project by the module leader. Make sure you are

crystal clear with your lecturers on this type of work, as a group project might require an individual report.

- **Cheating** - Bringing unauthorised material into an exam setting, especially materials that would enable access to information relating to the exam. This also includes failure to observe exam regulations and accessing information during any authorised breaks.
- **Impersonation** - When a student allows another person to fraudulently take their place in their exam.
- **Unethical conduct** - Failure to gain ethical approval for a research project, engaging in bribery or coercion with participants, failing to obtain participant consent, failing to maintain confidentiality principles or other breaches of ethical guidelines.

(Taken from Marjon Study Skills. (2019). Plagiarism & academic integrity: What is plagiarism? Retrieved from <https://sites.marjon.ac.uk/handbook/plagiarism-academic-integrity/>)

### 2.1.2 Principles of academic integrity

According to the International Center for Academic Integrity (2012) the following values are associated with academic integrity:

- **Honesty** - Being truthful, open and honest to advance knowledge and learning environments
- **Respect** - Valuing the diversity in ideas, thoughts and opinions and facilitating cooperative learning
- **Trust** - Mutual trust that encourages the free exchange of ideas to enhance academic inquiry
- **Fairness** - Clear and fair expectations, guidelines and regulations that are followed and support fairness of interactions
- **Responsibility** - Upholding personal accountability for actions, following guidelines and leading by example
- **Courage** - The courage to translate these values into action, and standing up and speaking out in the face of adversity

## 2.3 Experience of using scenarios

Students have responded well to these scenarios and have engaged in discussion of boundaries when it comes to academic misconduct and plagiarism. Students often contribute their own experiences which clarify the main concepts. Particular focus has been on where the boundary begins between acceptable academic conduct and academic misconduct. Other

discussions have centred on instances of group dynamics in group assignments, and how to overcome the issue of an individual's lack of contribution.

## 2.4 Relevant resources

Marjon Study Skills. (2019). Plagiarism & academic integrity. Retrieved from <https://sites.marjon.ac.uk/handbook/plagiarism-academic-integrity/> - *all information created for students about plagiarism by Marjon Study Skills.*

Plagiarism.org. (2017). About Plagiarism.org. Retrieved from <https://www.plagiarism.org/> - *useful blog on all things plagiarism, created and monitored by Turnitin. Useful for preparing for questions on plagiarism, similarity, identifying plagiarised work etc.*

University of Bergen. [UIB]. (2010, May 27). Et Plagieringseventyr [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mwbw9KF-ACY> - *Excellent, tongue in cheek video on plagiarism. 5:12 running time, good ice-breaker for beginning of session.*

## 2.5 Contact information

For guidance, advice or to suggest updates to this material, please email [studyskills@marjon.ac.uk](mailto:studyskills@marjon.ac.uk)



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