

BEST PRACTICE IN AN ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT INTERVIEW

The academic misconduct interview is a chance for a student to explain their actions and for the investigating staff member to determine whether misconduct has occurred, and if so, at what level. It also provides an opportunity to help the student better understand academic integrity and correct practice, and to signal that the University takes these matters seriously.

It is important to note that Level 1 misconduct is based on naïve student error, and the University mandates that the correct response to this is educative rather than punitive. The interview may be stressful for the student, who may not have a good understanding of what they have done wrong and/or the misconduct process. Interviewers are thus encouraged to be sensitive and empathetic, and to help guide the student through the process, answering any questions they may have.

1. Have all information at hand. This includes:
 - the online Alleged Academic Misconduct Reporting form
 - the piece of assessment in question, annotated to show alleged academic misconduct
 - report(s) or other assessment(s) that allegedly corroborate the academic misconduct
 - a copy of the Schedule of Outcomes where Academic Misconduct is Proven
 - other information as appropriate.
2. Introduce yourself, welcome the student and thank them for attending the meeting. If the student has brought a support person, ask to be introduced.
3. It is very important that the student has a full understanding of the process and the part this conversation plays in the process. So, explain the reason for meeting and outline the process, noting the following:
 - Identify the piece of work and the paper/course.
 - Indicate that you will outline the alleged misconduct in detail, sharing the assessment and any other relevant material that has been put forward to suggest academic misconduct has occurred.
 - Indicate that the student will be offered the opportunity to comment and contribute any information they feel is relevant.
 - If a support person has accompanied the student, explain that they are there to support the student, and that your interaction will be with the student. In some instances, the support person will be required to have an active role, e.g. when there is a language barrier and translation is required.
 - Explain that a database is maintained by Academic Integrity. This database holds a record of all investigations of alleged academic misconduct and the outcomes of those investigations. Explain its 'checking for previous instances of alleged academic misconduct' purpose. Assure the student that information in this database is kept in confidence and is not shared with anyone other than staff investigating alleged cases of academic misconduct. Assure the student that in the event that academic

misconduct is proven to have occurred, this is lodged against their name on the database but never appears on their academic record (this is often a big student concern).

- Refer to the Schedule of Outcomes, explain its purpose and ask if the student has read it and explain the purpose of the penalties and educative action. This is another opportunity to alleviate unnecessary anxiety. If the initial assessment of the case is at Level 1 the alleged academic misconduct (if proven) is unlikely to be so severe as to warrant failure of the paper. In such instances, it may be useful to assure the student, without prejudice, that the level of alleged misconduct under investigation would not attract the higher-level penalties.
 - Advise the student that you will be taking notes of any explanations provided so that you have an accurate account of the conversation when you write your report.
 - Finally, ask if the student has any questions before proceeding.
4. Work through the academic misconduct materials with the student, highlighting the alleged similarity that has brought the assessment up for investigation. Ask the student for their comments/explanation. Follow through in discussion, guided by student responses. When taking notes, remember that anything you write may be discoverable.
5. When the questioning/discussion period comes to an end, thank the student and advise them of the next steps. At this stage, it is helpful to indicate:
- The case may be discussed with the Divisional Associate Dean (Academic) explaining this is done to make sure that decisions are fair and equitable across the University.
 - Once all the information is considered and a decision is made, a report is sent to the Head of Student Experience, who will then report the outcome to the student in a letter sent by email to their student email address.
 - Students should expect to receive their letter within a week. If they have not heard by a week's time, they can be invited to contact the Head of Department for an update on the timeframe.
 - A discussion about the importance of academic integrity and the value in taking pride in one's work, coupled with discussion around how to avoid academic misconduct, e.g. time/work management, where to get assistance etc. can helpfully conclude the meeting.

It is important to remember that the student might be under other significant pressures or stresses within and/or outside of the University community - such as mental health, bereavement or living situations. This is not to provide justification for the misconduct but rather to provide a wider picture when dealing with them. The guide *Helping stressed, distressed, and struggling students: A practical guide for staff* (available on the [Academic misconduct information for staff](#) webpage) is a helpful resource in providing guidance around student wellbeing. It's a useful read when preparing to meet with students in the academic misconduct context generally. It also provides guidance on what to do if you have any concerns about a student's wellbeing made known to you during the meeting.