

Concerning Academic Misconduct Interviews for ADTLs and academic staff

Concerning Academic Misconduct cases normally occur when a student was reckless or negligent in their academic work. This could include plagiarising in the second or third year, colluding with other students, or receiving a large amount of editorial assistance for an assignment.

These cases are assigned to Associate Deans Teaching and Learning but may be delegated to a Unit Coordinator to investigate, including interviewing the student (usually in cases of first instance plagiarism by experienced students). These interviews may take **30-60 minutes**, depending on the complexity of the case. These meetings are designed to be **exploratory**. Students may still be completely unaware that their actions breached ECU’s academic integrity policies.

If a Concerning Academic Misconduct case has been assigned to you via email, use the following steps as a template for meeting with students. If you feel you do not have the disciplinary expertise, you can also request the Unit Coordinator to be present to ask specific questions on your behalf.

- 1) Start the interview by introducing yourself and confirming the purpose of the meeting, including confirming that a determination will only be made after the meeting. If you would like to record the meeting, permission must be requested from the student if it occurs via MS Teams. It is good practice to request the student use their camera for online meetings so you can verify their identity.
- 2) Record the name of the student’s support person if they have one present. They can assist the student in responding, however you can insist you also need to hear directly from the student in the conversation. If the student does not have a support person present, let them know that they are allowed to have one. If they’d like one, you’ll need to reschedule. Otherwise, otherwise the meeting can proceed.
- 3) Show the student the material in question and explain your concerns. Use the following guide for questions you could ask:

Interview guide
What was the process you went through to complete this assignment?
<p>For <i>plagiarism</i> cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnitin highlighted that this paragraph/sentence is very similar to text from this website. Can you tell me the process you went through to include this information in your work? • Paraphrasing means rewriting ideas or information in your own words. What is your understanding of paraphrasing? Can you tell me how you attempted to paraphrase this piece of text in your words? • This section of text indicates an incorrect use of in-text citations. What was your process for attempting to reference? Did you check your Turnitin similarity report?
<p>For <i>inappropriate collaboration</i> cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Turnitin similarity report matches closely with other student submissions in this unit. Did you work with anyone else to complete this assignment or access a draft assignment online? • Which parts of the assignment did you complete yourself and which did you work with other students to complete? • What device did you use to complete your assignment? Was this shared at all with other people or students? • Were you aware that this was an individual task and could not work with other students to complete it?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this match with another student because you worked together or found a similar document online?
Have you completed the Academic Integrity Module? (What did you get out of it? (optional)
Did you contact your unit coordinator or tutor for help?
Did you access any other ECU support services such as learning advisers or librarians?
Was there anything else happening in your life that impacted your ability to complete this assignment?

4) Provide students with materials to support better practices in the future, including:

- [Meeting with a Learning Adviser](#)
- [Meeting with a Student Success Officer](#)
- [ECU Academic Skills resources](#)
- [ECU referencing guide](#)

5) Explain the [possible outcomes](#) (as detailed in the Academic Misconduct Procedures) and that they will receive a notice about it within 7 days. Explain to the student that a decision will be made after the interview has concluded.

6) Invite any final questions and thank them for attending.

These interviews can be distressing for some students. In these moments it is important to be kind, offer them a moment to collect themselves if needed, and redirect to appropriate [support services](#) as required. You may also decide to follow up directly with the [ECU student success](#) team afterwards to see if an officer can contact the student to check on their welfare.

If the student did not attend the interview, you can proceed to make a decision without the student present (as they had the opportunity to respond and engage in the process).

Making a decision

After the meeting, you need to consider what the most appropriate outcome should be. Here are some considerations to help guide your decision-making:

- If there is insufficient evidence, the decision should be 'No Misconduct'.
- If the student demonstrated complete unawareness and the act is relatively minor (e.g., small amounts of plagiarism), consider a lighter penalty such as a written warning, educational interventions, and/or a marks deduction.
- If the plagiarism or inappropriate collaboration forms a significant portion of an assignment, consider a marks deduction in line with the extent of the breach (e.g., a 40% marks deduction where there is approximately 40% of the assignment that is plagiarised).
- If the entire assignment is plagiarised or identical to another student submission, the student should receive a 'Disallow all marks' penalty.
- If the act seems more serious than originally suspected, escalate the case to Serious Academic Misconduct in the case management system for further investigation. This will return the case to the Academic Integrity Team who will then reassign it to an ADTL panel investigation.

If you are unsure about what to do, contact academicintegrity@ecu.edu.au or speak with your Associate Dean Teaching and Learning.

Any mark deduction should be done in line with the total marks value of the assignment. For example, if you decide to apply a 50% penalty for an assignment worth 20 marks the student should lose 10 marks from what they would have received if they did not commit academic misconduct.

Finalising the case

After the meeting, use the link in your email to access the case in the Academic Misconduct Management system. Input relevant details, including a summary of the meeting and the outcomes you've decided. Once this has been submitted, you will receive an e-mail from academicintegrity@ecu.edu.au with suggested wording to send to the student advising them of the case decision and outcomes applied (usually within 48 hours). You can customise /contextualise the email, and then send it to the student as a formal advice.