

Final Response to Academic Conduct Consultation Forum – July 2023

In January 2023, we provided an interim update in response to your feedback and suggestions as part of the Academic Conduct Consultation Forum. The Academic Conduct Review (ACR) Project has acted on this feedback and the information below is an update since our last response. The ACR Project has greatly benefited from the insights gathered through this forum; thank you again for all your contributions!

The table below outlines some of the key messages emerging from the forum feedback along with the OU response, and how the feedback will be taken forward where relevant. The messages have been organised according to the key forum discussion threads and where the same topic has come up in two places, the response has been included again for completeness.

What do the terms ‘good academic practice’ or ‘academic integrity’ mean to you as a student and which of these terms do you find most helpful?

You said	Our response	Our next steps
Some of you find the terms we use confusing, or you use the terms in a different way to the OU.	<p>We are updating information on StudentHome and this will include clear explanations for terminology related to academic conduct.</p> <p>We are also changing the letters we send to students about academic conduct. Our aim is to use clear, plain English and avoid including unnecessary terminology or information.</p>	<p>New StudentHome content launched to be launched from Autumn 2023.</p> <p>New letters to be used from Autumn 2023.</p>
There are a lot of different places where you would look for information on good academic conduct, and some aren't easy to find.	We are creating a 'landing page' on StudentHome and on OpenLearn so that resources can be signposted from a single location.	<p>New StudentHome content to be launched from Autumn 2023.</p> <p>New OpenLearn collection to be launched from late Summer 2023.</p>
Students should be taught about good academic practice early in their studies with the OU.	<p>We are working with the student induction project to try to embed learning about good academic practice into induction.</p> <p>We are introducing principles for module design so that modules are aware of the need to introduce good academic practice.</p> <p>We have piloted offering student access to Turnitin reports before their assignment, as a tool to support their understanding.</p>	Turnitin pilot being evaluated and currently planning to roll out for more modules from Autumn 2023.

Why do you think it is important that the Open University encourages all students to write in their own words and rigorously investigates instances of cheating or academic misconduct? What behaviours would you consider to be academic misconduct?

You said	Our response	Our next steps
You expect instances of academic misconduct to be investigated in a sensible, fair and appropriate manner.	We have refined the 'academic misconduct tariff', which defines what sanctions will be applied to different forms of academic misconduct. We are also producing guidance for Academic Conduct Officers, Module Teams and Tutors involved in detecting and investigating academic misconduct offences to ensure that there is parity between investigations and outcomes across Faculties.	The new tariff and guidance are expected to be ready to implement from Autumn 2023
At times, you disagreed about what might be considered as academic misconduct.	We have reviewed the Academic Conduct Policy and Code of Practice for Student Discipline to try to clarify the different types of academic misconduct offences. We have developed a set of principles to guide Module Teams on how best to teach students about academic integrity when they start their studies at Level 1.	The updated Academic Conduct Policy is available here Academic Conduct Policy Student Policies and Regulations The Open University

What resources have you used that have helped you to develop your study skills and your ability to write in your own words? Which of these were particularly helpful?

You said	Our response	Our next steps
There are lots of good resources available, but some students can't find them, especially students struggling with digital literacy skills.	We are creating a 'landing page' on StudentHome and on OpenLearn so that resources can be signposted from a single location. Although we can't do anything about digital literacy as part of the Academic Conduct Review, we will pass these comments on to colleagues working on the induction programme.	New StudentHome content to be launched from Autumn 2023.
You told us that you value Student Hub Live events to help you with your studies.	We have created some 'bite-size' videos from a Student Hub Live event we ran in November which will appear on OpenLearn.	New OpenLearn collection, with StudentHub live videos, to be launched late summer 2023.

What do you think should happen to students who are found to have committed academic misconduct?

You said	Our response	Our next steps
Students need help to develop their skills if they are found to have committed plagiarism early on in their studies	<p>We have produced a new set of resources for Tutors to share with students as part of the study skills sessions for academic conduct.</p> <p>Our updated letter template will encourage students to make use of the information and guidance available on StudentHome and OpenLearn.</p>	New resources for Tutors to be introduced from Autumn 2023.
Different types of academic misconduct should have different sanctions, with more serious sanctions reserved for intentional or repeated misconduct	<p>Our new penalty tariff, which provides the framework for the type of sanction appropriate to the type of academic misconduct, will launch from September 2023. We are exploring how best to communicate this penalty tariff to students, so they can better understand how decisions about academic misconduct are reached.</p> <p>We understand that not knowing what might happen when students are referred for academic misconduct is an anxious time for students. We are also reviewing our information to students so that students referred for academic misconduct can understand what will happen and what the likely outcomes may be.</p>	The new tariff and guidance are expected to be ready to implement from Autumn 2023

What situations do you think may lead a student to copy work or engage in other forms of academic misconduct and how can the Open University support students in these situations?

You said	Our response	Our next steps
Several factors may influence why a student engages in academic misconduct, including time pressures, pressure to succeed from external sources and lack of support	<p>Although we are unable to influence some of the factors which may lead to a student engage in academic misconduct, we have reflected on how to reinforce our existing support mechanisms for students. We are improving the information available to Tutors and Student Support Teams, so they are better able to support students throughout their studies.</p> <p>We are looking how we can refer students with multiple academic conduct cases to their SST for a discussion about their circumstances and other help</p>	New guidance to be made available by end of 2023.

	that may be available, e.g., Managing time, reducing study intensity, English for academic purposes	
--	---	--

Can you tell us what you know about how academic misconduct is detected and investigated at the Open University?

You said	Our response	Our next steps
Students would benefit from more information about the investigation process, and this should include a flowchart to support students' understanding.	We are updating the information available on StudentHome and this will include a flowchart to explain the investigation process to students.	New StudentHome information available from Autumn 2023.
Students need to understand how an investigation was triggered and the reason they are being investigated.	This information will be provided on StudentHome. We are reviewing the amount of information contained in the letter to students and, where possible, will provide clearer information about how a student's work was identified for investigation.	New letter content to be introduced from Autumn 2023.
The timeframes for students to find out about an academic conduct investigation are not timely	We are introducing a new early notification to students. A communication will be sent to the student at the point they are referred by a Module Team for academic conduct investigation and/or study skills support.	New early notification letter anticipated to be introduced from Autumn 2023.
Students should receive information on how to appeal.	We have revisited our current appeals process and information will be included on StudentHome. We will include guidance to students on who to contact for advice and support.	A revised appeals process is expected to be introduced from Autumn 2023.