

GUIDE TO DETERMINING THE APPLICATION OF POOR ACADEMIC PRACTICE

To assist Academic Integrity Officers, National Unit Leaders and other Officers in ACU in determining whether a finding of 'Poor Academic Practice' is appropriate, this matrix has been developed.

There is a degree of flexibility in the matrix for staff to consider contextual information. All decisions, however, must comply with the [Student Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy](#) and the [Student Academic Misconduct Procedure](#).

Determination of Poor Academic Practice (PAP)

ALL students are potentially eligible for a PAP ([Procedure S8.43](#)) for minor contraventions of the expected academic standards for university-level study in Australia. Where a minor contravention has been detected, a student may be eligible for a PAP when:

- 1) 'there are no more than a total of two records relating to previous determinations of poor academic practice, or any finding of academic misconduct'; AND either:
- 2) 'there was no significant academic advantage for the student or any other student'
 - e.g. insufficient referencing; sections of poor paraphrasing; using a paraphrasing tool to improve expression for a small section
- AND/OR
- 3) 'the student is enrolled in the first eight units of undergraduate or equivalent sub-bachelor study, or first four units of postgraduate study at ACU'.

Please note that 2) does NOT have to apply to less experienced students. But just because an inexperienced student is eligible under 3), does not mean there can have been a significant advantage gained, as this would not constitute a minor contravention.

Determining whether there has been a 'minor contravention of expected standards' and the extent of any 'academic advantage'.

Under the definition of a PAP, there must be a minor contravention of the expected academic standards. For less experienced students, the expectation of what constitutes 'expected academic standards' will be set to a lower level.

If a determination of PAP is made, no mark penalty is applied, and the work is assessed against the marking rubric/guide. For example, if you think the text has been AI-generated, you cannot refuse to mark the suspected AI-generated material. In this example, if marks were to be deducted solely for suspected use of generative-AI, the student would have valid grounds for an appeal. You can, however, mark the suspected sections down if they do not address the assessment criteria.

One approach to determining whether a minor contravention has occurred is to consider the consequences of marking the work that was submitted. If you believe that doing so would give the student a significant advantage over others in the cohort who did not engage in the behaviour, you may decide it cannot be a PAP. Additionally, consider the purpose of the assessment task and the learning outcomes. If you are confident the student has met the learning outcomes, you may be more likely to decide of a PAP.

In practical terms, for students who meet at least eligibility criteria 1 and 3, many potential misconduct cases will qualify as a PAP. However, under [Procedure S8.44](#) a PAP determination is **not applicable** if the student has:

- a) engaged in contract cheating;
- b) offered or accepted a bribe;
- c) cheated in an examination;
- d) used, copied or shared another student's assessed work;
- e) inappropriately drawn from only one or two sources which comprises the majority of their work; or
- f) attempted to hide or disguise the poor academic practice

Criteria a, b and c are clearly defined under [Policy S8.16](#). There is no flexibility in these cases and these students are **not eligible for a PAP**.

Examples of where a PAP may or may not be applicable

Issue	Likely to be applicable to all	Possibly applicable to inexperienced students only	Unlikely to be applicable to anyone
Referencing	Moderately inadequate referencing and/or inadequate citations	No references OR no citations	No references AND no citations
Paraphrasing	Some sections of poorly paraphrased material, that are correctly cited and referenced Small section of poorly paraphrased material that is also not cited	Some sections of poorly paraphrased material, that are NOT correctly cited and referenced Substantial sections of poorly paraphrased material, that are correctly cited and referenced	Substantial sections of poorly paraphrased material, that are also NOT correctly cited and referenced
Plagiarism (see referencing and paraphrasing above for related issues)		Extensive very poor paraphrasing, but the student has attempted to link ideas and integrate information	Cut and pasted freely from internet or other sources (without indicating quotes), so that the amount of work that is the student's own is negligible

Issue	Likely to be applicable to all	Possibly applicable to inexperienced students only	Unlikely to be applicable to anyone
<p>Collusion</p>	<p>Students colluded on a small part of the assessment; most of it is their own work</p> <p>Students meet up to discuss the assessment in detail; they then separate and write their submitted text alone</p> <p>Student One does the work and gives it to Student Two on the naïve understanding they just want to ‘get an idea’; Student Two takes it and relies on it heavily for their own submission; Student One could be eligible for a PAP; Student Two would be unlikely to be eligible</p>	<p>Accessed a past submission (e.g. on a share site) and mined it for some material to include; the copied material is a small part of the whole (this is more like small-scale plagiarism)</p> <p>As above, but multiple papers are mined for content; the copied material is a small part of the whole</p>	<p>Accessing another student's past work (e.g. on a share site) and submitting that as their own</p> <p>As above, but re-writing sections of it to reduce matching; the submitted work still has large sections of copied material</p> <p>As above, the text is rephrased, but the work follows the same flow of ideas and arguments</p> <p>One student does the work and gives it to a friend; the extent of copying is similar to any of the examples above (<i>note: see example in first column</i>)</p> <p>Two or more students get together and share the work, then swap answers; the extent of copying is similar to the examples above</p> <p>Stealing work from another student: e.g. logging into Canvas to access someone else's work</p>
<p>Collusion in group work</p>	<p>There is a misunderstanding about how the work involved in a designated ‘group work’ assessment is divided; this could be a PAP if ‘no significant academic advantage was gained’</p> <p>Students realise that a specific ‘group member’ is not contributing to designated group work, but allow that person to put their name on the submission; this could be a PAP for those that did the work (the student who did not contribute would not be eligible)</p>	<p>There are a variety of assessments in the unit, some of which involve designated ‘group work’; there is a misunderstanding about what level of collaboration is and is not appropriate for different tasks</p>	<p>A ‘group work’ member does not contribute and takes credit for work that they did not participate in</p>

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<p>Unauthorised use of generative AI</p> <p><i>Note that the 'AI%' in Turnitin is conservative; a low Turnitin % may not represent the actual extent of AI use</i></p>	<p>Very small section (perhaps less than 20%) of the work is affected</p>	<p>Review of submission suggests that less than 30% of the assessment task was affected by the use of AI</p>	<p>Review of submission suggests that 30% or more of the assessment task was affected by the use of AI</p>
<p>Unauthorised use of an AI paraphrasing tool</p> <p>You would need to have grounds for believing the student has used a paraphrasing tool, and not a gen-AI tool (e.g. they understand the content; they have shown you drafts)</p> <p><i>Note that the 'AI%' in Turnitin is conservative; a low Turnitin % may not represent the actual extent of AI use</i></p>	<p>Used a paraphrasing tool to 'polish' language in the assessment.</p> <p>This might be a PAP if English language expression was a relatively minor aspect of meeting learning outcomes (e.g. for a Science student where demonstrating understanding of chemical processes was the primary concern)</p>		<p>Used a paraphrasing tool to re-write their entire work to improve the English expression, to 'polish' their own work; where English expression was a primary aspect of meeting the learning outcomes of the assessment (e.g. for a Literature student where demonstrating the ability to write in varying 'tones' is integral to meeting the learning outcomes of the task)</p> <p>Used a paraphrasing tool to re-write plagiarised/colluded material in an attempt to avoid detection</p>
<p>Unauthorised use of an AI translation tool</p> <p>You would need to have grounds for believing the student has used a translation tool, and not a gen-AI tool (e.g. they understand the content; they have shown you drafts)</p> <p><i>Note that the 'AI%' in Turnitin is conservative; a low Turnitin % may not represent the actual extent of AI use</i></p>	<p>Prepared the entire work in a language other than English; they then used a translation tool to translate to English. They can provide evidence of the original work</p>		<p>Prepared the entire work in a language other than English; they then used a translation tool to translate to English; where writing in the other language was a primary aspect of meeting the learning outcomes of the assessment (e.g. for a language unit)</p>

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Fabrication and Falsification			<p>Any use of hidden characters to attempt to disguise an activity; this is a deliberate and planned activity and it cannot be a PAP. For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to reduce/increase word count • to hide recycled or plagiarised text <p>Extensive paraphrasing has been conducted to conceal the source of the original text, for example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • done manually • via an artificial intelligence paraphrasing tool <p>Extensive fabricated references (which may also be associated with AI use), for example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dates changed to fit with assessment requirements for recent sources • extensive use of sources not relevant to where they are cited
Online examination issues	<p>Conditions clearly breached, but staff member is confident this was accidental and no advantage was gained</p> <p>e.g. forgot to clear their desk of all materials (note that in an in-person exam, the student would be reminded at the start to remove everything from the exam desk, and could easily comply; this opportunity for on-the-spot correction of an error is not possible for Proctorio exams)</p>		<p>Any situation where the staff member is confident that a deliberate attempt was made to try and circumvent Proctorio/LockDown Browser exam conditions</p>