Academic integrity matters

At Heriot-Watt University (HWU) we adopt the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI) definition of Academic Integrity: *'a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage'*. Failure to act with integrity during assessments demonstrates a lack of these fundamental qualities, qualities that we value highly at HWU, as do your future employers. It is therefore vital that you and your peers uphold these values and avoid all types of academic misconduct.

It is essential that you always practice proper academic and professional conduct, as per the guidance provided, and act with integrity and honesty when you are working on your assessments, regardless of the type of assessment.

Academic integrity is key to assuring the quality of our degree programmes as well as imbedding trust in our student and staff learning and teaching community. Heriot-Watt University (HWU) expects all students to learn with integrity, which means doing the best within their own ability to demonstrate their acquired knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject. In doing so you will develop the professional values and skills which are sought by employers.

The following sections summarise guidance on acting with academic integrity in university assessments and details about the range of resources provided by the University which can help you understand the importance of academic integrity and the strategies you can use to avoid academic misconduct.

Awareness of tools that are supported by the University and tools that are not

- During your assessment it is important that you use software and applications which do not compromise the integrity of your submission. It is strongly advised that you only use University supported software. If you are unsure, you should seek guidance from your course team or examination staff. The specific assessment instruction provided to you by your course team should also highlight more details, if relevant.
- Do not pass off Artificial Intelligence-generated content (such as ChatGPT, OpenArt) as your own. If you do use an artificial intelligence content creation tool to develop your assessment, you should first seek advice from your course team and lecturer whether this is acceptable in your course or not and to ensure that you identify which parts of the assessment were created in this way, if allowed. Acknowledging your sources is a key aspect of good academic practice and protecting academic integrity.
- The University's supported software for similarity checking is Turnitin, other paraphrasing/similarity checking tools or functionality, e.g., Grammarly, Quillbot are not supported by the University and must not be used for checking your submission similarities or paraphrasing. You are encouraged to engage with our existing support and guidance developed by the [Information Services (IS) Skills Hub](#) team to develop [your academic writing knowledge and skills](#), and to contact your course leader for guidance.
- You have access to the full office365 suite, which includes Editor in MS Word, this is not dissimilar to the spelling, grammar and tone functionality offered by online tools. The MS office 365 suite of tools is free to HWU students and readily available.

- Do not use websites that can lead to contract cheating such as Chegg, CourseHero, etc. Whilst these sites may advertise themselves as study aids or similar, any site which offers help with writing some, or all of your assessment, or requiring you to upload material produced by Heriot-Watt University staff such as exam papers, lecture notes, PowerPoint slides, **must be avoided**. If you need further support, you should engage with your personal tutor and course team members.
- It is important for you to acknowledge and reference properly any resources you have used for your assessment. This extends to also include images and photos, for such cases reverse image and video searches to locate any data which has not been referenced correctly can be used.

Wellbeing support/advice hub

Assessments and exams affect everyone differently, and it is important to think about your style of learning, and how you give yourself the best chance of working well. To help with this, the Student Success Advisors have created an Assessment Checklist (scroll down to the bottom of the page, in the General Support section under Assessment Support, you will find the Assessment Checklist), providing tips and advice to support your preparation. You can also access a range of Self Help resources online if you are experiencing anxiety or feeling overwhelmed, or can use the booking tile on myHWU to select an appointment with a Student Success Advisor or Counsellor.

Wellbeing Activities run throughout the semester, these include workshops on Perfectionism and Managing Stress. There is also a designated session for Managing Exam Stress, and daily Drop-in sessions run throughout the year, with additional sessions over the exam period. These sessions are held within the Student Wellbeing Centre. You can find your campus specific details from this link.

IS Library

Depending on the type of assessment, you may be required to find quality literature or data to base your assessment on, e.g., for annotated bibliography, essay, literature review or data analysis tasks. To help with this, the university library pays for resources to support learning, teaching and research including books, journals, academic research papers, literature databases and data sources. These are selected and curated by a team of professional librarians in conjunction with your teaching staff to help you find appropriate and reliable information on which to base your coursework. Accessing the library collections using the library's Discovery service or subject guides will help get your assessments off to the best start by finding authoritative and credible sources. One-to-one advice and guidance is available from your Campus Library or your Liaison Librarian who can help with using the library collections and services to best advantage to find reliable information for your assessments.

IS Skills Hub

Skills Hub offers a set of online materials and workshops (in-person and online) to support you with various aspects of your assessments. Topics covered include study skills (e.g., academic integrity, good note taking and groupwork), assignments and exams (e.g., critical thinking, writing essays, reports, and dissertations), library and referencing skills (e.g., finding information and citing and referencing) and digital skills (e.g., advanced Word skills and using Excel). Acknowledging the sources of information or data you use in your assessments is key to avoiding plagiarism and is a key element of academic integrity. Skills Hub's citing and referencing guidance will help you with this task and our team of Liaison Librarians and Effective Learning Advisers are available for one-to-one advice with this and other study skills.

Guidance on how to avoid academic misconduct

1. **Understand what academic misconduct is**
   Read and get yourself familiarised with the [University Policy on Academic Integrity in Assessment](). Ensure that you understand the types of academic misconduct such as Plagiarism, Self-Plagiarism, Collusion and Contract Cheating, they all apply equally to any types of assessments. It is your responsibility to access, read, and understand this policy – ignorance is not an acceptable excuse.

2. **Help us to protect the value of your degree**
   If you have been approached by someone about, or you know of someone engaged in, an act of potential academic misconduct, please contact in confidence the University Student Conduct Office ([conduct@hw.ac.uk]()).

3. **Prepare for the assessment**
   Depending on the type of your assessment, whether it is an end of semester in-person invigilated exam, time-limited open book assessment, project or laboratory reports, essays, or graphic-based assignments, you will need to prepare and plan in advance. Good preparation leading to sound knowledge and understanding will give you the confidence to write in your own words and avoid the pressures that so often lead to academic misconduct. Skills Hub organises [Time Management Skill]() workshops that will help you manage your time more efficient during semester and also with your assessment preparations.

4. **If you have a problem**
   If you experience difficulties, through *no fault of your own*, that impact on your ability to sit the assessment, you should refer to the [Mitigating Circumstances (MC) Guide](), and submit an application backed up with appropriate evidence. Never resort to cheating – this will be investigated and could result in an Invalid Grade (IG) on your degree transcript. The MC process enables you to let the University know that you were dealing with an unexpected adverse situation, and that you wish this to be considered in the marking of your assessment. It is important to read the MC Guide and submit your application and evidence, as soon as possible. You can also visit the [Advice Hub web page]() to access guidance and support to complete your form. You can contact the advice hub via [email]() or speak to an advisor in person. You can find full details of the mitigating circumstances that HWU rejects/accepts in this [Mitigation Circumstances Guide]() and instructions on how to apply for MCs on the [Mitigating Circumstances webpage]().

5. **Avoid plagiarism**
   During most open-book assessments, you are allowed to consult any books or articles as well as the internet. However, you must not copy the words of others from any of these sources. Use your own words. If you feel it is useful to quote the words from a book, article, or relevant website, then you must cite the original author, provide the correct reference, and use speech marks, following the required referencing style. This applies equally to essay-based and numeracy-based assessments. If in doubt about referencing, then you should go to the ['Skills Hub']() and view the resources on citation and referencing or attend one of their workshops to learn more.

   For in-person, invigilated exams, do not carry unauthorised materials, such as formula sheet to the examinations. "*Bin it or Bag it*", do not keep any of the unauthorised materials and your mobile phones near you or even in your pencil case. Leave them all in your bags away from your seat. Pay attention to the type of calculator you can use. You can refer to [this]() guidance for information on approved calculators in examinations.

6. **Avoid unintentional plagiarism**
   During some assessments, you are allowed to consult your own notes and, any of the course materials, such as lecture slides, images, drawings, and recordings. If you are not diligent then this can result in plagiarism. For example, if the course notes you have prepared include sentences extracted from the work of others, e.g., books, journal articles, websites, and you have then forgotten that your notes are not entirely written in your own words, then you may end up reproducing the words of others in your submission without proper acknowledgement. Even if this

is unintentional, this is classified as plagiarism and a breach of academic integrity. It is important to consider when taking inspiration from a source to ensure this is presented in your own words as if you are explaining it to someone else. Avoid taking direct copies with little or no change to the original.

7. **Avoid self-plagiarism**
   Do not submit or use any previous work within a new assessment which you have previously submitted at HWU, any other institution, or for postgraduate students in your previous institution. This includes, an entire assignment, copying or paraphrasing content, or recycling data, style, concepts, drawings, designs, building plans or research. Whether intentional or not this is considered self-plagiarism. Note, this is particularly important if you are repeating/reattending a course. Always follow your course team instructions and consult with them, as there are rare occasions self-plagiarism is allowed. For example, final year projects which are extended over an academic year, i.e., two semesters, that the content and data created in one semester is continued to the next semester. For students in the School of Textiles and Design in particularly: you may wish to develop upon concepts and designs from previous projects or develop a longer running project. However, this must be carefully communicated with staff and referenced correctly and complimented with new data.

8. **Avoid collusion**
   Do not share or discuss your questions or answers with anyone else (including on social media and on messaging services) even if others promise not to copy your work, unless you are engaged in a group and teamwork, but you should ensure that the assessment instructions are adhered to. Even if you have done all the work on your own, if you share all or part of it with others, it will be treated as collusion.

9. **Avoid contract cheating**
   Do not be tempted to 'Google' or search for a question or answer online. If you access an online service (e.g., an 'essay mill') to upload a question OR to look at an answer, you run the risk of being detected and therefore suspected of contract cheating or plagiarism, even if you do not copy the answer into your submission. Do not seek assistance from anyone else to complete any part of your assessment. Whether you pay someone or not, if you submit the work of a third party as your own then this is contract cheating.

10. **Image, drawing, design, and film citation**
    Just as with other types of resources, when using other people's images, drawings, or digital media such as films, you must reference them correctly to evidence the original source and author of the data and avoid claiming this as your own work.

Consequences of academic misconduct

Please be aware that the University uses sophisticated detection processes, including, but not limited to, Turnitin similarity detection software, website searches and agreements with online services to provide us with upload and download data should our assessment questions or similar appear on their websites. University staff use many resources to check that your submissions do not draw from the work of others in an inappropriate way. If staff suspect that you have colluded with other students, or you have copied from another's work, or you have asked or paid for a third party to help you complete the coursework, or any other breach of academic integrity, then this will be investigated, and all suspected cases will be taken forward as a potential disciplinary matter through the University's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

Recent academic misconduct cases have led to assessment results being voided, i.e., a mark of zero is awarded and Invalid Grade (IG) recorded on your transcript (this stays on your HWU record) and expulsion from the University without the opportunity for an award (for the most severe cases). The University's response to evidence of plagiarism can be found on the Plagiarism webpage.