



Guide to Academic Conduct

2026-2027

**Free, independent and confidential advice
from your Students' Union.**

This guide aims to provide you with basic information and advice on the **Academic Conduct** process and the options available to you if you have been told of an alleged breach of Academic Conduct.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the University's **Academic Conduct and Standards Policy**.



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winchesterstudents.co.uk/advice

Support

You don't have to go through the process alone.

The Student's Union **Advice Centre** is available to support you throughout your experience.

We can:

- **Explain** Conduct processes
- Help you **understand** University correspondence
- Help you **prepare** your response
- **Meet** with you, via appointment, to discuss any questions or concerns you may have
- **Accompany** you to an Academic Conduct Panel, where appropriate

You can get in touch with us via winchesterstudents.co.uk/advice

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Academic Conduct & Standards

Why does the University have this policy?

The University expects all students to complete their work honestly and fairly.

Academic integrity means producing work that is genuinely your own, giving credit to other people's ideas, and following the rules of your assessments.

The aim of the **Academic Conduct and Standards Policy** is to:

- Protect the value of your degree
- Ensure all students are treated fairly
- Maintain confidence in the University's qualifications
- Help students develop and maintain good academic practices throughout their studies

The University recognises that students learn and develop over time, and that mistakes - particularly early in your studies - can happen.

Not every academic mistake is treated as academic misconduct.

Good Academic Practice

As a student, you are expected to:

- Write your own work
- Reference your sources correctly, and acknowledge the work of others
- Work independently, unless group work is authorised
- Only use AI where your assessment specifically allows it
- Present genuine data and evidence
- Seek support if you're unsure of what's expected

Poor Academic Practice

Sometimes, your work may fall below academic standards, **without being misconduct** (e.g. weak referencing, accidental citation errors, misunderstanding assessment requirements, etc.).

If this happens, you'll normally receive feedback, your mark may reflect these weaknesses, and you may be asked to complete **Additional Learning** to support you to meet academic standards in future work.



Academic Misconduct

What is academic misconduct?

Academic misconduct is alleged when there is evidence to suggest that someone has tried to gain an unfair academic advantage.

An allegation is **NOT** a finding of misconduct. It signals an investigation will take place into how you completed your work.

Examples of misconduct include:

- **Plagiarism** (using other's ideas/work without acknowledging them - including your own work, known as **self-plagiarism**)
- **Cheating**
- **Collusion** (unauthorised collaboration)
- **Paying someone else** to complete your assessment(s)
- Submitting **AI-generated work** as your own where it isn't permitted
- **Falsifying** research or evidence
- **Personation** (someone completing your work on your behalf)

What about AI?

The University does **not** ban artificial intelligence (AI) completely, and recognises that it can be a powerful tool to support learning and development.

However:

- If your assessment says AI isn't permitted, **you must not use it** to create work you submit as your own
- If AI use is allowed, you should **follow the guidance** given for that assessment - and check ahead of time if you are unsure what is/isn't permitted
- Unauthorised AI use may be treated as **academic misconduct**

The University will normally contact you through your Unimail email account - this includes notifying you of an allegation, supplying evidence, and providing information on how you can respond.

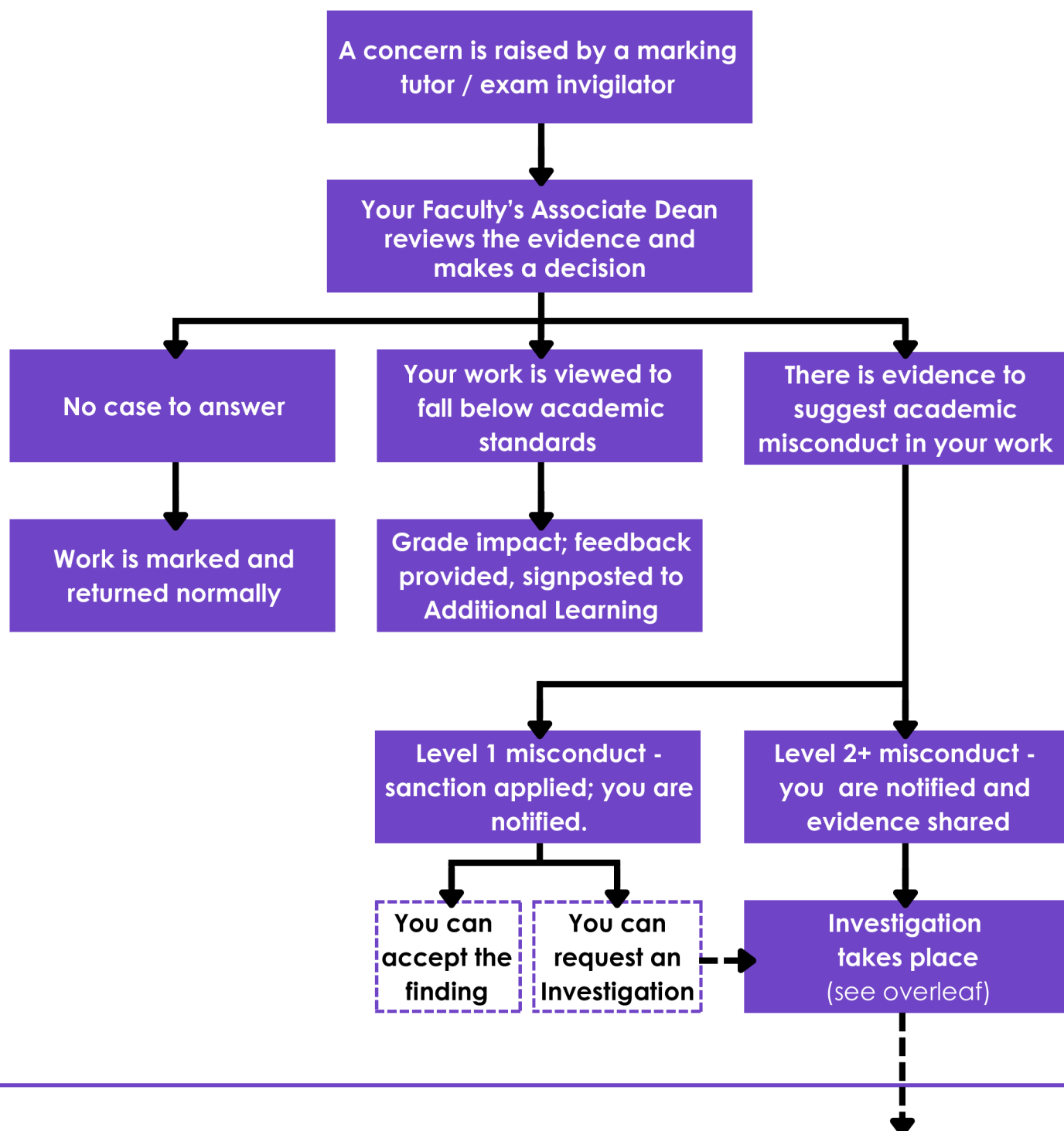
It is important that you have access to, and regularly check, your university email throughout this process so as not to miss any correspondence.

If you are having trouble accessing your account, contact the University's Knowledge & Digital Services team.



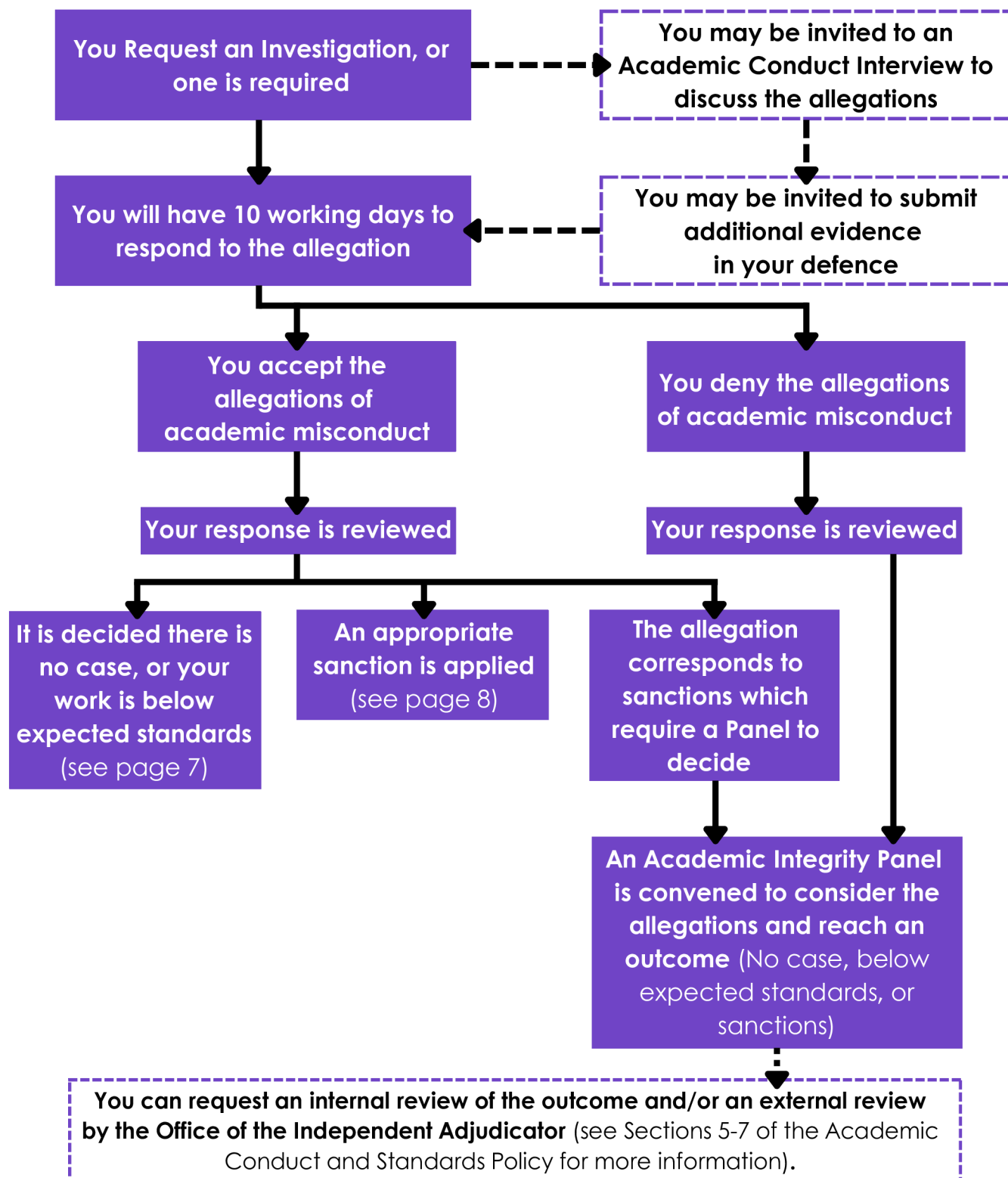
What happens if Academic Misconduct is suspected?

Below is a basic outline of the process. For more detailed information, see the full **Academic Conduct & Standards Policy**.



Investigating an Academic Misconduct Allegation

For more detailed information, see the full **Academic Conduct & Standards policy**.



Your Rights

If you are investigated, you have the right to:

- Know exactly **what you're being accused of**
- See the **evidence**
- **Respond** to any allegations (usually within **10 working days**) - and accept or reject the allegations
- Provide your own **evidence**, and explain your circumstances
- Attend an **Academic Conduct Interview**, if such is requested
- If invited to attend an **Academic Conduct Panel**, to be accompanied by a member of the University community (e.g. another student), or a representative from the **Students' Union Advice Centre** (*make sure to provide as much notice as possible if seeking this, as late-notice requests may not be facilitated*)
- **Appeal** the outcome of an investigation (on specific grounds)

Possible Outcomes

Not every instance of alleged misconduct will lead to a sanction.

Possible outcomes include:

- **No case to answer**
All allegations will be dropped, and your work will be marked as normal
- **Work doesn't meet Expected Academic Standards**
Work is marked as normal, and your grade reflects the standard of your work. Your feedback will provide insight into how well you've met the standards, and recommendations on how to improve. You might be directed to **Additional Learning** to help you reach the expected standard.
- **Academic Misconduct**
If allegations are upheld, a sanction will be applied. Sanctions correspond to the level of misconduct, and your level of study (see overleaf)
- **You can appeal a sanction on the grounds below:**
 - You believe the sanction wasn't reasonable
 - Important, new, evidence has become available
 - You have evidence that correct procedures weren't followed



Academic Misconduct Sanctions

Below is a basic outline of the sanctions which may be imposed for breaches of academic conduct. For more detailed information, see the full **Academic Conduct & Standards Policy**.

LEVEL OF MISCONDUCT	POSSIBLE SANCTION
Level 1 (e.g. Minor Plagiarism)	• 10% grade penalty (if applicable) • Additional Learning
Level 2 (e.g. Plagiarism, minor AI misuse)	• 25% grade penalty OR • Additional Learning and resubmission for capped grades
Level 3 (e.g. Falsification, Cheating, Collusion, Personation)	• Repeat Study* for capped grades • Additional Learning
Level 4 (Extensive and repeated breaches of academic misconduct)	• Termination of registration and/or withdrawal from University • Revocation / reclassification of award post completion of studies

If a grade penalty would take your work **below a passing grade**, you would be required to submit a new piece of work for a capped grade.

***Repeat Study** is when a student is required to undertake an additional study year after having failed one or more modules in a previous academic year. The aim is for a student to obtain the required credits in order to proceed onto the next level or stage of study (e.g. move from Level 4 to Level 5).

When repeating study, you only study the number of modules required to obtain the credits you need and won't take any other modules. You may wish to speak to the University's **Funding & Financial Wellbeing team** to discuss how Repeat Study may affect your personal finances.



Responding to an Allegation

Before you begin

Receiving an allegation of academic misconduct can feel overwhelming. However, **an allegation is not the same as a finding that misconduct has occurred.**

The University will investigate the evidence before making a decision, and you have the opportunity to explain what happened and provide any evidence that supports your account. Investigations are decided on the **balance of probabilities**—that is, whether it is more likely than not that academic misconduct occurred.

Take time to carefully read:

- The allegation(s)
- The evidence provided
- The Academic Conduct and Standards Policy
- Any assessment guidance for the assignment(s)

Step 1: Understand what you're being accused of

Don't respond until you're clear about:

- **Which assessment** is affected?
- What **type of misconduct** is alleged?
- Which **parts of your work** are being questioned?
- **What evidence** has the University provided?

You can find common allegations on **page 4**



Step 2: Gather your evidence

Before writing your response, collect anything that demonstrates how your work was produced.

Useful evidence might include:

- Digital drafts of work, including Word version history (to show the development of work over time)
- OneDrive history
- Digital notes from reading / research articles
- Planning documents
- Screenshots
- Emails / correspondence with tutors
- Research data
- Copies of assessment guidance

It is highly recommended that you make use of the University-provided Microsoft 365 suite to draft, record, and complete work, so you can demonstrate authorship of your work more easily.

The University's policy specifically notes that you may be asked to provide **drafts, notes, and preparatory work** as part of an Academic Conduct Investigation.

While handwritten notes and drafts may be submitted as evidence, this format is more open to manipulation (e.g. it would be easy to add or change a date), and so digital formats, which can demonstrate changes over time, are likely to offer a stronger form of evidence in support of your authorship.

There are no limits on the amount of evidence you can submit in response to an allegation.

Take care to ensure that all evidence submitted is relevant. If submitting numerous pieces of evidence, you may wish to organise them systematically, and give them clear identifiers (e.g. Evidence 001) in order to make referring to them easier.



Step 3: Structure Your Response

A clear structure helps the investigator understand your account.

1. Introduction

Briefly explain **why** you're writing.

Example:

I am writing in response to the allegation of academic misconduct relating to my assessment for [module]. I appreciate the opportunity to explain how I completed this work and have responded to each aspect of the allegation below.

2. Respond Directly to the Allegation(s)

Don't write generally. Instead, **answer each allegation individually**.

For each point, **explain**:

- *Whether you agree or disagree with the allegation*
- *What happened*
- *Why it happened*
- *What evidence supports your allegation*

Explaining your Process - describing how the work was produced.

For example:

- *when you started*
- *how you researched*
- *how you drafted*
- *how you referenced*
- *how you edited*
- *how the final submission was produced*

A timeline is often helpful.



Referring to your Evidence

Rather than saying:

"I wrote it myself"

Instead, **explain**:

"I have attached four drafts showing how the assignment developed over three weeks together with my research notes"

Evidence is usually far more persuasive than assertion.

3. Explain any Relevant Circumstances

If something affected your work, explain it clearly.

Examples may include:

- misunderstanding referencing
- misunderstanding AI guidance
- technical issues
- disability-related impacts
- unexpected personal circumstances

The University expects students to notify relevant staff when they experience difficulties, at the time they are occurring. You will need to explain why you could not / did not engage with support at the time you experienced any difficulties that may have impacted your work.

4. Reflect

Whether or not you agree with the allegation, it is often helpful to explain what you've learned.

For Example:

- improving referencing
- seeking support earlier
- attending Academic Success sessions
- asking tutors for clarification

5. Finish Positively

Summarise:

- Your position
- The evidence you've attached
- Your willingness to answer further questions



Before You Submit Your Response

- ☒ Have I met the 10 working day deadline?
- ☒ Have I made clear which decision(s) I am appealing?
- ☒ Have I answered every allegation?
- ☒ Have I attached all relevant evidence?
- ☒ Have I explained how I produced my work?
- ☒ Is my response clear and easy to read?

Common Mistakes

✗ Simply saying "I didn't ..."

Instead, explain **why** the allegations are unfounded, and support your explanation with evidence.

✗ Ignoring part of the allegation

Respond to every issue raised.

✗ Becoming accusatory

You can, of course, disagree with allegations made against your work, however, keep your response professional, and factual - linked to your evidence.

✗ Assuming the investigator knows what happened

If you feel something is important, explain it.



Academic Conduct Panels

What is an Academic Conduct Panel?

An Academic Conduct Panel is not designed to catch you out. Its purpose is to consider all of the available evidence and decide:

- whether, on the balance of probabilities, academic misconduct occurred; **and...**
- if so, what sanction (if any) is appropriate

If your case reaches a Panel, this **does not mean** that misconduct has already been proven.

Who will be there?

Typically, an Academic Conduct panel will consist of:

- The **Academic Registrar** (or nominee) who will Chair the meeting
- An **Academic member of staff**
- The **Academic Conduct Officer** who has investigated your case
- A **Secretary** to record minutes

You can also choose to be accompanied by a fellow student (provided they aren't linked to the allegations), or a representative of the Students' Union.

Whoever accompanies you can support and advise you, but **cannot answer questions on your behalf**.

If seeking someone to accompany you from the Students' Union, please do so as early as possible. Late requests may not be able to be facilitated.



Before the Panel

Read everything carefully. Before attending, make sure you have read:

- the allegation(s)
- all supporting evidence
- your own response
- your assessment (and any related materials)

The University should provide all relevant documents before the meeting.

Organise your evidence. Bring copies (electronic or paper) of anything that supports your explanation, such as:

- drafts
- notes/plans
- version histories of relevant work
- AI conversation history (if relevant)
- relevant emails/correspondence

Arrange them in the order you intend to discuss them.

During the Panel

Listen carefully. Allow each question to finish before answering.

If you don't understand a question, it's perfectly acceptable to say:

“Could you repeat or rephrase that question, please?”

Panels are interested in understanding your account - **not** in testing how quickly you can respond.



During the Panel

Answer the question that is asked. Avoid lengthy answers that don't address the point.

A useful approach may be:

- Answer
- Explain
- Refer to evidence

For Example:

"Yes, I used ChatGPT to help me generate possible essay structures. I did not copy any text into my assignment. I've included screenshots of those conversations, and my drafts show how I developed the final work independently."

Be Honest

If you've made a mistake, say so. Panels are generally better approached with an honest explanation than by trying to defend something that is clearly evidenced.

Equally, if you genuinely disagree with the allegation, explain why and support your explanation with evidence.

Take Your Time

You don't need to answer immediately. It's perfectly reasonable to pause for a few seconds before responding.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, you can ask for a short break.

If You Don't Know

Don't guess. It's better to say "I don't remember", or "I'm not certain, but I believe..." than to speculate.



Questions you may be asked

Every case is different, but Panels may explore questions...

About your assignment/assessment

- How did you begin?
- When did you start?
- How long did it take?
- How did you research it?
- Why did you choose these sources?

About your writing

- Why did you structure it this way?
- When were these drafts created?
- Why are there similarities between these documents?
- Why are there differences between this piece, and your other pieces (in terms of tone and style)?

About your circumstances (where relevant)

- What support did you seek at the time?
- Why didn't you seek support?

About AI (where relevant)

- What guidance had you been given about acceptable use of AI?
- Which tools did you use?
- Which outputs did you keep / reject?

The Panel may also ask you questions about anything that you have included in your response(s) to them, so **be prepared to speak to any claims you have made, and any evidence you've provided**. It is okay to repeat your position as a response.

Questions you can ask

During the Panel, you will also have an opportunity to ask questions of the other members present, including the Academic Conduct Officer.

Consider whether there are any questions you'd like to ask.



Things to Avoid:

- **Arguing with the Panel** (this is not the same as disagreeing). Explain, clarify, and provide evidence.
- **Interrupting** others
- **Blaming** others (unless directly relevant to your case, and supported by evidence)
- **Not asking for clarification**, if you're not sure about something. This could be related to the allegations, or the process in the room.

REMEMBER

The Panel is interested in understanding **what happened, how your work was produced, and whether academic misconduct occurred**. They are **not** expecting perfection.

A calm, honest, and evidenced explanation is a good approach to adopt.

After the Panel

- The Panel Secretary will write to you confirming the Panel's decision, and any next steps (usually within 5 working days)
- Sanctions will be applied / modified / dismissed (as relevant)
- If you believe that there has been a **procedural error**, that the **sanction is unreasonable** given the evidence, or **you have new evidence** (not previously available) that could affect the outcome, you may have **grounds to appeal** the Panel's decision.
- You will have 10 working days from receiving the written decision to submit an appeal (see **page 6**).

We're here to help

Regardless of the outcome you receive, if you would like further guidance and support to explore further options, don't hesitate to get in touch with us at the Students' Union **Advice Centre** for free, impartial, and confidential advice.



Quick Start Guide: I've received an Academic Conduct allegation... What happens next?

Below is a basic outline of the process. For more detailed information, see the full **Academic Conduct & Standards Policy**.

You receive an email from the University (via your unimail account)

Read the email carefully

*What is the allegation?
Which assessment is it about?
Has any evidence been provided?
By what deadline do you have to respond? (usually 10 working days)*

Decide how you want to respond
You might:

- Agree and accept the allegation(s)
- Disagree and challenge the allegation(s)
- Explain the circumstances
- Share evidence you'd like to be considered

Submit your response

Monitor your University email inbox for updates.
You should receive a response within 15 working days.

REMEMBER

An allegation is **not** proof that you have committed Academic Misconduct.

Read all emails carefully and meet any deadlines.

Respond honestly and provide any evidence you think is relevant.

Don't ignore University emails - if you don't respond, the investigation will continue without your input.

Looking for support & advice?

Contact the

Students' Union Advice Centre

We can help to explain the process, review the evidence, and help you prepare your response. Visit winchesterstudents.co.uk/advice for more information.

You may be asked to provide more evidence, attend an interview, and/or an Academic Conduct Panel (see pages 5-6)



Frequently Asked Questions

Will I automatically fail my assignment if my work is investigated?

Not necessarily. Outcomes depend on the circumstances of your case, the evidence available, and the seriousness of the issue.

If a sanction is imposed, and it leads to a failing grade, then you will have the option to submit a new piece of work for capped grades.

What if I made an honest mistake with referencing?

Not all referencing errors are academic misconduct. Some errors will be seen as academic skills issues, and be reflected through normal marking and feedback processes. You might have to complete some Additional Learning to help develop your skills and bring them up to the required standard.

Can I get help before responding?

Yes. The Students' Union Advice Centre offers free, independent, and confidential advice. We can support you with understanding University policies, and the grounds for appeal, drafting responses, and (on timely request) accompany you to Academic Conduct Panels.

What if I ignore the University's emails?

The investigation can continue without your response, and decisions may be made based on the available evidence without your input. **It is vital that you monitor and engage with any emails you receive.**

Can the University investigate my work after I've graduated?

Yes. There is no time limit on beginning an investigation, and the University may investigate work even after an award has been made (i.e. after you've graduated).



Useful Contacts & Further Support

Winchester Students' Union Advice Centre

Your first stop for independent advice about Academic Conduct

The Advice Centre can help you understand the Academic Conduct process, identify where you are in the process, and prepare your response. The SU is independent from the University and provides free, impartial advice.

Link: winchesterstudents.co.uk/advice

University Academic Integrity Team

For questions about the **Academic Conduct Process**, including deadlines, submitting statements, or reasonable adjustments, contact the Academic Integrity team.

Email: academic.integrity@winchester.ac.uk

Academic Conduct and Standards Policy

Read the University's Academic and Standards policy for the formal rules governing the integrity process.

Visit: The **Complaints and Casework** page on the intranet, and select 'Academic Integrity'

Academic Appeals Guidance

Read the University's Appeals guidance leaflet. New guidance is issued each academic year.

Visit: The **Complaints and Casework** page on the intranet, and select 'Appeals'

Academic Success

Can help you develop study-related skills, including academic writing, research, and referencing. They offer free resources as well as 1:1 appointments.

Email: academicskills@winchester.ac.uk

Tel: 01962 827341

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

Still unhappy after the University's internal process?

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) is an independent body that can review eligible student complaints about higher education providers. You will need to complete the University's internal procedures first and receive a Completion of Procedures Letter before you can raise an issue with the OIA.

Visit: oiahe.org.uk



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Notes

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*We're here
to help!*



Winchester Students' Union Advice Centre can be accessed by all current University of Winchester students. We aim to support students to make their own informed choices by offering free, impartial advice and information on a range of matters.

If you would like further support, get in touch by completing our **Advice Enquiry Form**.

You'll find the Advice Centre in the King Alfred Centre on Level 3 (next to the Foodhall).

