



Student Policy on Academic Integrity and Guide for Dealing with Academic Misconduct – Version 2.0

Ref: UC/ P 779/2025

As approved by University Council Decision No. UC/2719/03/2025-26 of meeting No. UC/03/2025-26 held on Thursday the 18th of December 2025.

This policy is to supersede the previous policy on academic integrity and guide for dealing with academic misconduct approved by the University Council, as per the document carrying reference number UC/P 701/2024. The policy is to be implemented as of the Second Semester 2025/2026.

Student Policy on Academic Integrity and Guide for Dealing with Academic Misconduct V.2

1.0 Introduction

The Student Policy on Academic Integrity and Guide for Dealing with Academic Misconduct provides a set of clear guidelines for the implementation of procedures for detecting academic misconduct, the reporting of such cases, and the application of transparent penalties. This document was developed in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) Principles. The main purpose of the guidelines outlined within this document is to provide a clear framework for:

- Promoting academic integrity and maintenance of academic standards
- Fostering high ethical and moral standards
- Ensuring fair and transparent mechanisms to preserve authorship intellectual property and prevent plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct

National Alignment

- Higher Education Council Strategy
- Bahrain Economic Vision 2030
- Institutional Accreditation Standards for Higher Education Council
- Bahrain Education and Training Quality Authority Quality Assurance Standards for Institutional and Academic Programme Reviews
- National Qualification Framework Standards for local and cross-border qualifications

International Alignment

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) – SDG 4 Quality Education
- United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO)

2.0 Ahlia University Policy for Academic Integrity and Ethical Standards

1. Ahlia University counts integrity as one of its six (6) core values. Accordingly, learners are expected to demonstrate high ethical and moral standards with respect to all aspects of their academic journey and learning experience.
2. Ahlia University introduces, emphasises, and inculcates academic integrity and ethics in all learners through various means and mechanisms, from induction programmes to final graduation projects, dissertations, and theses.
3. Ahlia University emphasises academic integrity and ethics in research through integration in course syllabi and programme learning outcomes across all academic programmatic offerings as contained in the (D) category of intended learning outcomes.
4. The University implements formal and transparent procedures for reporting and managing cases of plagiarism and academic misconduct.

3.0 Types of Academic Misconduct

Ahlia University defines academic misconduct as any action which undermines, or attempts to interfere with, the university's ability to fairly evaluate a student within the context of a formal academic exercise, towards gaining an unfair academic advantage, for oneself or others. Accordingly, there are at least seven (7) types of academic misconduct, which the University acknowledges and wishes to prevent:

- **Plagiarism** includes the practice of presenting ideas, words, data, diagrams, illustrations or other output as original pieces of work or without proper acknowledgment (including appropriate identification and referencing) of the source. Ahlia University has a zero—tolerance policy when it comes to plagiarism.
- **Use of AI Generated Text** this includes AI generated text from tools such as ChatGPT or any other related chatbot platforms for rephrasing with the intent of circumventing detection. As per AU policy for utilization of AI in teaching and assessment. Students may use AI as informal learning and verification of specific information, however the text, design, programming or analysis generated as part of the assessment should be original work of the students. In case of using AI generated text for other editorial or processes such as Grammarly, the students should provide a clear declaration and should not exceed 15% of Gen AI.
- **Data falsification** is an act involving willful creation of false data, as in students in the project filling out questionnaires by themselves rather than distributing them and soliciting legitimate feedback from the population, or changing data collected on received questionnaires.
- **Use of third parties (tacit personation) or cheat-ware sites** which, typically for a fee, write all or part of a manuscript or design a model that students in the project then present as their own original work - including AI generated software. When third parties prepare an academic work-product for one (or more) cohort members, a form of tacit **personation** and contract cheating results. However, cohorts may use a professional proofreading service provided that they declare use of such a service.
- **Free riding collusion** involves one student (or more) in the project cohort doing work on behalf of another who in fact makes no contribution to the project. In free riding collusion both the student(s) not doing any work as well as the other(s) doing work at the behest of the former, who passes such work off as his/her own, are liable.
- **Recycling collusion** involves one student (or more) in the project cohort enlisting outside-the-cohort support of one student (or more) who's previously submitted academic work product is fobbed off as being the unique intellectual work product of those concerned conspiring project cohort members.
- **Active personation** occurs when one (or more) students outside the cohort substitute for one (or more) students in the project cohort proffering false identities at the time of project defense (in the admittedly unlikely scenario of the project supervisor not remembering the physical appearance of each member of the cohort).
- **Cheating in Assessments** occurs when one (or more) students in a classroom/examination hall exhibit specific dishonest behaviours such as sharing, or attempting to share, information, and using, or attempting to use, unauthorised materials or devices, within the context of an in-class assessment or final examination. This extends to online examinations by collusion and soliciting the help of others.

4.0 Dealing with Similarity / Suspected Plagiarism

Ahlia University acknowledges its role in the development of the students' knowledge on sound academic practice in general, and academic integrity in specific. Accordingly, the University is committed to providing on-going education and advice to students regarding the importance of academic integrity, and related regulations for the application of fair and proportionate penalties in cases of academic misconduct.

All content flagged by "turnitin™" must be reviewed by the faculty members/supervisor to ensure that verbatim text is quoted and that for such, and paraphrased text, that appropriate citations are provided by the student. It is possible even if the "turnitin™" result is zero similarity that plagiarism has occurred in as much as paraphrased text is not provided with the source through a valid citation.

The tolerance limit for similarity is set by the type of assessment, whereby similarity is considered based on matching text in phrases of 6 words or more (excluding the reference list). In case of limited similarity that is the result of poor academic practice, the student is to be advised by the faculty member/supervisor and may be allowed to rewrite the concerned portion of the manuscript for resubmission.

In cases of misconduct, the faculty/supervisor will record a misconduct case on the ADREG system and upload the materials for chairperson review and decision making towards the application of penalties as per university procedures.

4.1 Similarity tolerance as per the types of assessments

Types of Assessments *	Similarity Tolerance percentage
Coursework Assessment	Maximum of 15% and not more than 2% from one source Turn-it-in Similarity and Maximum of 15% usage of Gen AI
Undergraduate Final Project	
Postgraduate Dissertation	
PhD Thesis	
Any other types of assessments that may require special consideration of the similarity tolerance percentage that may involve usage of specific tools which could impact the similarity percentage, may be considered as part of the internal verification process in line with AU Assessment Manual.	

5.0 Guidelines for Deterrence of Academic Misconduct and Reporting

a. With regard to assignments and written project/dissertations

All assignments and written projects should be submitted electronically through Moodle, a plagiarism detection software "turnitin™" is linked to Moodle and provides the percentage of similarity to the faculty members by generating a detailed report highlighting phrases and references. Course instructors and supervisors are required to check the students' submitted work, as per the report generated from "turnitin™", to judge the percentage of similarity and ensure it is within university allowed norms. In case of misconduct, the faculty/supervisor will record a misconduct case on the ADREG system and upload the materials for chairperson/dean review and decision making towards application of approved penalties as per university procedures.

b. With respect to non-test/exam-based assessments

Latest versions of all textbooks should be used. Answers to questions can be downloaded using “cheatware” on a fee basis. The longer the question is in the market, the greater the risk that the question has been compromised by “cheatware.” As a matter of good practice, any questions appearing at the end of chapters should be modified to frustrate the downloading of answers using “cheatware” especially, in those limited cases, when the latest textbook version is not being used. In the employment of cases, instructors, as a matter of best practice, ought to recognise that the answers may likewise be compromised and ought to formulate new questions to frustrate students tapping into answers through “cheatware.” In case of offences, students who are caught cheating will have their paper withdrawn and will be awarded zero for that specific assessment. The case will be documented by the faculty member on the ADREG system, approved by the Chairperson/Dean and overseen by Deanship of Student Affairs.

c. With respect to in-class tests

Best practice mandates that instructors use multiple test versions to deter copying with minor changes in the content of questions to render difficult ability of students to identify the test version they have. Alternately, tests can be broken down into separate test components with different components being distributed in phases. Thus, a three- question test with questions A, B and C would be administered in three phases with the students getting one of the three questions with a mix of each of the three distributed in the same phase. The limitation of this technique is that each question need be formulated to require the same completion time. In case of in-class cheating offences, students who are caught cheating will have their paper withdrawn and will be awarded zero for that specific test. The case will be documented by the faculty member in ADREG system, approved by the Chairperson/Dean and overseen by Deanship of Student Affairs.

d. With respect to final examinations

In terms of increasing the risk of being caught cheating borne by students prone to academic misconduct, deterrence can be maximized by following the rules and regulations appertaining to invigilation, and by denying such students access to technologies that can be misemployed in the service of cheating. In this respect, rules and regulations appertaining to final examination administration bar student access to mobile phones at all times during the period in which the final examination takes place. It is advisable that for any objective test component using multiple choice format that two sets of the same questions be developed in random order and randomizing the answer choices such that what appears as (a) on one set appears as (b) on another set. (See Invigilation and Final Examination Administration Regulations.)

In case the students are caught cheating during the final exam, the invigilator must call the second invigilator to witness the cheating behaviour and the student will be informed and asked to leave the examination hall. The student paper will be withdrawn.

The invigilator will record the case on the ADREG system. Exam offences and the corresponding penalties are dealt with according to the Invigilation and Final Examination Administration Regulations under the aegis of the Deanship of Student Affairs and in conjunction with an appointed disciplinary committee. In this respect, the Deanship of Student Affairs maintains a centralised record of all misconduct cases as documented in ADREG including exam violations in order to determine areas for enhancement in the examination and disciplinary procedures. The same penalties applicable to infraction of rules and regulations apply equally to in-class tests. Where feasible, exam applicable to multi-section courses should

be conducted in single chamber according to the same rules and regulations applicable to those appertaining to final examination.

e. Process for detection misconduct in visual and design studios

All interior design projects and portfolios should be checked for possible academic misconduct through the application of the “Visual Plagiarism Policy and Procedure” which outlines guidelines surrounding detection of visual plagiarism, and various levels of verification. The policy is applicable for all in-lab work, sketchbook, portfolios, and any other student work which involves visual application. Faculty members must check the student work for visual plagiarism and verify content by using “level of verification checklist”.

Visual plagiarism can be detected, although not with the accuracy of software such as “turnitin™” with respect to textual plagiarism. This can be done through digitalizing artwork and scanning using reverse image search engines: Google/Yandex/Bing/TinEye. Photos can be assessed with even greater rigor both through the same and through an analysis of meta-data generated by the camera. Student- snapped photos without meta-data should be removed portfolio as should any copyrighted photos, collected not snapped by the student, absent permission from the copyright holder.

For more information on best practices with respect to digital plagiarism:

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7d48/5012fda313b1b4a9132d8055096e0b6ffeee.pdf>

(accessed on 19/05/2024) as well as the application of “*Visual Plagiarism Policy and Procedure.*”

f. Design studio rules and visual plagiarism

- Attendance in class is mandatory and will be reflected on the final grade. Only excused absence may be taken into consideration.
- Students are responsible to take notes from their colleagues to cover any missed classes.
- Students must always carry a sketchbook for sketching design ideas/concepts. The sketchbook should be present in every studio class and submitted before the final jury as part of your design project.
- Students must use class time to work on developing their designs/research as well as discuss the design solutions with colleagues and instructor.
- Students must read magazines and books, not just look at pictures.
- Students must learn how to search; random internet surfing will not be allowed.

g. Visual plagiarism

Visual plagiarism is as serious as text plagiarism. The following steps provide a simple to help in detecting visual plagiarism:

- **Specific Problem:** Design problem is going to be given to students which will restrict the flexibility of copying such as: specific topic, plan, location, style.
- **Instructor View:** Working and developing your work in class is a major aspect to find if student work is original.
- **Sketchbooks:** Documenting the process in students’ sketchbook is the ultimate proof for the originality of work.
- **Visual Plagiarism Check:** TinEye and google images are services that will be used to spot matched

- images online.
- **Original files:** Students are going to be asked to show original files (AutoCAD, 3D max, etc.) and will be asked about the details and technicality of it.

In this regard, it is important to note that the University has a zero-tolerance policy against plagiarism. Suspected cases of plagiarism will be recorded as a misconduct case on the ADREG system, with materials uploaded for chairperson/dean review and decision making towards application of penalties as per university procedures.

6.0 Reporting Misconduct

The faculty member/supervisor/invigilator must record the case in ADREG system with the evidence required. The case will be automatically forwarded to the chairperson/dean of the college for decision making as per the approved penalties.

A copy of the decision on the penalty applied will be forwarded to the academic advisor for reference.

The process will be overseen by the Deanship of Student Affairs to maintain a register on a university-wide basis for all cases of academic misconduct.

The typical penalty for collusion is the award of zero grade for all in misconduct in the instance of a first-time offence. All instances of misconduct must be documented in ADREG and overseen by the Dean of Student Affairs. **Repeat offenders will be subject to a hearing before the University Disciplinary Committee.**

In cases of misconduct at a final examination, the exam violation procedure applies, whereby invigilators must fill out an exam violation form, to be submitted to the Deanship of Student Affairs (refer to section 5 subsection d).

7.0 Penalties

Types of Assessment *	Immediate Penalties approved by the Chairperson/Dean
Coursework Assessment	Zero for the assessed coursework
Undergraduate Final Project	Fail and repeat of Final Project
Postgraduate Dissertation/Applied Project	Fail and repeat of Final Project/Dissertation
PhD Thesis	Fail
In-class test or written assessment	Zero for the coursework
Final Exam	Zero, fail, and repeat of the course

8.0 Student Appeal against a Misconduct Decision

Students have the right to appeal the decision by documenting a complaint on the ADREG system.

9.0 Roles and Responsibilities of the University Disciplinary Committee Review

Students who receive more than three penalties for academic misconduct will be flagged as major attention cases. Such cases will be forwarded to the University Disciplinary Committee for further deliberation which may result in more severe penalties being applied.

The final judgement of the University Disciplinary Committee will be made based on the degree of offense (mild, moderate, or severe). The University Disciplinary Committee will also review the student profile and record, including non-academic misconduct, and based on which a decision will be made by the committee.

The decision of the University Disciplinary Committee Review will be communicated to students through ADREG system.

Key examples of Academic Misconduct based on degree of offense

Type of Offense	Mild Offense	Moderate Offense	Severe Offense
Key Examples (Note: list of examples is not exhaustive)	Coursework related misconduct with no prior record of non-academic related misconduct (i.e. behavioural conduct)	Final Exam misconduct repeat offender with some non-academic misconduct prior record	Undergraduate Final Project misconduct or Postgraduate dissertation misconduct with other related academic or non-academic misconduct
Sanction/ Penalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal reprimand/warning • Provision of written apology • Written reprimand/warning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of written apology • Community service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary probation (restricted privileges) • Suspension (fixed period) • Expulsion (permanent)