

Academic Registrar's Group, Academic Policy

Guidelines for staff

Self-Plagiarism

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The purpose of these guidelines is to assist staff in determining the appropriateness of students submitting previously-submitted work, and to clarify the circumstances in which previously-submitted work may not be used. These guidelines also clarify the role of the [Academic Integrity Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) and the [Student Conduct Policy](#) in determining further action.

1. Use of previously submitted work

As per the [Assessment and Assessment Flexibility Policy](#), students may re-use their own original work, provided they acknowledge it appropriately:

- (23) Students demonstrate academic integrity in their assessment practices by:
1. engaging with assessment activities in an honest way
 2. providing accountability for the authorship and originality of work submitted
 3. acknowledging the work of others and the re-use of original work.

Any work that has been previously submitted may be identified by Turnitin as a match when resubmitted. This could be explained/accounted for if the work was appropriately referenced. The scale of the matching would depend on the amount and nature of any re-work done before the second submission. It's possible for students to submit a revised version of the original work, however this must be appropriately acknowledged.

Work that has been previously submitted and not acknowledged as such may fall under the definition of self-plagiarism. Generally, a first-time instance of inappropriate referencing, or a breach of academic integrity due to a lack of knowledge or writing skills may be dealt with by the course coordinator with the intent of providing an educative response (as per section 3 of this guideline). If in doubt, staff can contact the Student Conduct Secretariat at student.conduct@rmit.edu.au for advice.

2. Circumstances where previously submitted work may not be used

Previously submitted work may not be used if it is specified in the course guide's assessment instructions that students cannot re-use work for a specific assessment. As per the [Program and Course Approval Processes](#):

6.1 The course guide is the approved statement of course requirements and as such forms part of the enrolment agreement with the student.

And;

6.11 The assessment section of Part A course guides states:

- 6.11.1 the assessment tasks
- 6.11.2 the weighting allocated to each assessment task (except in competency-based courses, where assessment tasks are not weighted)
- 6.11.3 any other requirements for satisfactory completion of the course or module
- 6.11.4 how the assessment is related to the course learning outcomes.

3. Academic Integrity

The [Academic Integrity Policy](#) addresses self-plagiarism in the Student Responsibilities Section:

Student Responsibilities

The intention of these provisions is to provide best-practice guidance in upholding academic integrity and mitigate the risk of future breaches occurring.

Students share responsibility for maintaining academic integrity at RMIT; this is achieved through:

- a. understanding and adhering to RMIT's expectations regarding academic integrity
- b. awareness and use of academic integrity educative resources and tools
- c. the honest presentation of academic work
- d. accountability for the authorship and originality of work submitted including cooperating with validation and authentication requests from staff
- e. using assessment declarations, and content matching or authenticity software prior to submission
- f. appropriately and accurately acknowledging the work of others
- g. acknowledging any re-use of original work from previous assessment tasks
- h. adherence to assessment rules

Self-plagiarism is also addressed in the section "Academic Integrity Breaches":

(15) A breach of academic integrity involves acting or behaving in a dishonest, unethical, unfair or irresponsible way in teaching, learning or research activities. Breaches of academic integrity include, but are not limited to the following examples:

- a. plagiarism
- b. significant failure to appropriately and accurately acknowledge the work of others
- c. failure to appropriately and accurately acknowledge one's own work where original work has been reused from previous assessment tasks (also known as self-plagiarism)

Breaches of Academic Integrity, including instances of self-plagiarism can be managed as per the [Academic Integrity Procedure](#). Staff apply their professional and/or academic judgment in identifying potential breaches of academic integrity and making an initial assessment of the level of violation. First-time, low-level breaches of academic integrity characterised by inexperience, lack of student knowledge, or poor writing skills may be managed as an educational opportunity initially by a course coordinator.

Repeat or higher order breaches that may be intentional, deliberately planned, organised or systematic, are reported to a Senior Officer to manage as a potential instance of academic misconduct under the [Student Conduct Policy](#). In managing academic integrity breaches that may constitute academic misconduct under the [Student Conduct Policy](#), Senior Officers refer to the [Academic Misconduct Senior Officer Response Guidelines](#) for guidance.

4. Case study

Recently the ARG was alerted to a case that was initially deemed self-plagiarism. The assignment required the submission of photographs taken in the current semester, which was clearly stated in the Assessment Guidelines. The student submitted a photo taken in the previous semester, and intentionally manipulated the metadata of the photograph to obscure the date the photo was taken.

While this may initially seem to be a case of self-plagiarism, the immediate issue was the deliberate manipulation of the data, thereby breaching the student responsibilities of academic integrity, i.e. "the honest presentation of academic work," "accountability for the authorship and originality of work submitted including cooperating with validation and authentication requests from staff," and "adherence to assessment rules."

As per Section 3, this kind of breach should be managed using the [Academic Integrity Procedure](#), and, due to the deliberate nature of the falsification, may also be managed using the [Student Conduct Policy](#).

5. Contacts and support

Staff seeking advice on managing self-plagiarism or academic integrity breaches can contact the Student Conduct Secretariat at student.conduct@rmit.edu.au with any further questions.

Resources:

- [Assessment and Assessment Flexibility Policy](#)
- [Program and Course Approval Processes](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Processes](#)
- [Student Conduct Policy](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Senior Officer Response Guideline](#)