

# How to Handle a Suspected Academic Offence - 5 Steps

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## **Step 1: Collect any evidence you may have regarding your suspicions.**

- Do not assign a grade for the work in question until you have resolved the matter. If it is the end of term and you must assign a grade, submit a mark of “NGA” for the course.

## **Step 2: Contact the student and establish a time to meet.**

- Keep the request simple.
- Do not make any accusations, but you should make the student aware of your concern.

## **Step 3: Conduct an interview with the student in person and in private.**

- You may invite someone else to be present, such as a TA, another faculty member, or the Department Chair, who can take notes and assist you.
- Explain your concerns to the student. Remain objective during the discussion.
- Give the student the opportunity to explain the circumstances as well as the opportunity to admit to the offence.
- Avoid making accusations. For example, ask them to discuss their paper, their research methods and the sources that they have used. Ask about the particular passages of the paper that you have found to be suspicious and if they can identify their sources.
- Be prepared with the documentation you have collected. Listen to the student’s responses. If there are discrepancies, explain your concerns.
- The student may become emotional. Have a list of emergency numbers on hand. If you are already concerned about the student’s reaction, speak with someone from one of the counselling services (CAPS or Crisis Response Service) in advance.
- Make notes of your meeting (though a full transcription isn’t necessary) to assist you in preparing a complete summary. You may need to refer to these notes if the matter is pursued further or if the case proceeds to the Divisional or Tribunal level.
- Do not return the assignment in question to the student, impose any sanctions on the student, or advise the student to withdraw from the course.

## **Step 4: Determine whether or not you believe an academic offence has occurred.**

- Has the student in this situation violated the Code? If so, an academic offence has occurred.
- If the instructor is satisfied that no offence has been committed, s/he will inform the student and no further action will be taken unless other evidence comes forward.
- If the instructor is not sure whether an offence has occurred, s/he should contact the Divisional representative for advice on how to proceed.

**Step 5: Provide a brief written summary of your finding and report the matter to your Department Chair/Dean.**

- If the student has not admitted to committing an offence, but the instructor believes an offence has occurred, the case must be forwarded via the Chair to the Divisional level.
- If the value of the work is 10% or less and the student has admitted to committing an offence, the matter can be resolved within your Department. Your Chair will assign a sanction, or work with you in determining one.
- If the value of the work is more than 10% of the course grade, the matter must be forwarded to the Divisional (or Faculty) level. Provide your Chair with the materials (or copies of) you have collected, which will be forwarded with the Chair's report.
- Instructors are invited to attend decanal meetings. Divisional procedures may vary for decanal meetings. Consult your Divisional office for further information.