

STUDENT GUIDANCE: COMMISSIONING

I have received an allegation of commissioning. What does this mean?

Commissioning is defined in section 1 (2) (b) of the Regulations on Academic Misconduct as:

'Commissioning, which is requesting or engaging another person or artificial intelligence tool (whether paid or unpaid) to write or rewrite work in order to obtain an unfair advantage for oneself. This would include the use of third parties such as family, friends, students, providers of essay writing services or providers of proofreading services not authorised by the institution.'

The University takes academic integrity very seriously and considers commissioning to be the most serious type of offence. If there is any indication that a student has submitted work that is not their own, markers will submit a request to investigate so that further action can be taken by the Chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel.

Your case file contains a copy of the request to investigate which outlines the marker's concerns about your submission, and explains why they suspect you may have submitted work that you did not write. The marker may also have provided additional evidence to support the allegation, which you will also find in your case file. You should note that Section 1 (3) of the Regulations states:

*'The identification of certain assessment offences, including plagiarism, commissioning, duplication, falsification, and collusion is a matter of expert academic judgement, based on a comparison across the student's work and on knowledge of sources, practices and expectations for professional conduct in the discipline. **Therefore it is possible to determine that an offence has occurred from an assessment of the student's work alone, without reference to further evidence.***

The Chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel has reviewed the allegation and evidence presented and determined that there is sufficient evidence of the allegation to require that a meeting should be held to discuss these allegations with you. The Chair may also have reviewed other work you have submitted for this or another module. These pieces of work may also be included in your case file, if relevant to the allegations raised.

You are expected to attend the meeting and, given the seriousness of the allegation and potential consequences, you are strongly encouraged to do so. The panel will wish to discuss with you your understanding of the allegation and your response to the concerns raised. They will also want to assess your understanding of the work you have submitted and how you approached completing it.

You are advised to submit earlier drafts or any other evidence you have which demonstrates that the work is entirely your own. Documents should be sent to academicmisconduct@rhul.ac.uk by **5pm the day before your meeting**.

If you are submitting a lot of evidence and want to discuss this in the meeting, then you should **submit it as soon as possible** so that the panel can review it before your meeting. If the panel have not had time to read all of the information before your discussion, then they may choose to review it after the meeting, but before they make their decision.

What evidence should I submit?

It is not possible to give you a list of documents that you should submit as evidence, as this is dependent on each allegation. If it is alleged that you are not the author of the work (i.e. commissioned essay or collusion), then you should present evidence that you are. This may include drafts of your work or screenshots of your search history.

Remember, evidence needs to be clear, attributable to you and dated.

Falsifying evidence is a serious offence. If it is thought that the evidence submitted is not authentic and was created to mislead the panel, they may opt for a more severe penalty. For the most serious of cases, the student may even be referred for Student Misconduct under Disciplinary procedures.

Do I do need to attend the panel?

You are expected to attend the meeting and your timetable has been taken into account in setting the time and date. It is important that you meet with the panel to address the allegation and authenticate yourself as the author of the work. If the Panel decides that you are not the author of the work and commissioning is proven, your case will be referred to a Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) to decide an appropriate penalty.

If you are unable to attend the meeting, you must let the Academic Investigations team know at the earliest opportunity. You are expected to provide a reason and will be asked for evidence (for example if you have a medical appointment you will be asked for a hospital letter or other proof of the date and time of the appointment) . In these circumstances the Academic Investigations team will make every effort to rearrange your panel to ensure you have the opportunity to address the allegation.

If your reason is accepted and the panel cannot be re-scheduled, you will be sent a questionnaire to answer and be provided with the opportunity to submit a statement in response to the allegation. If you do not attend the panel meeting you should ensure that the completed form is returned to AcademicMisconduct@rhul.ac.uk by **5pm on the day before your meeting is due to take place**.

The panel will take into account the information you have provided, along with the evidence submitted by the marker, and make a decision based on the evidence available to them.

Before completing the form you should review the information and guidance available on the [Student Intranet](#). The [Students Union Advice Centre](#) can also help you to prepare your case and your statement.

It is important that you understand that by not attending the meeting you will lose the opportunity to explain any particular circumstances or answer the panel's questions.

Are there any consequences if I do not attend the panel?

If you decide not to attend the meeting you will not have another opportunity to discuss the allegation or provide any further relevant information before a decision is made. This is your

opportunity to do so and your non-attendance at the meeting cannot be used to support any future appeal on the ground of '*fresh evidence*'. You should therefore ensure you include all relevant information in your statement to the panel and submit any evidence you have to address the allegation or support any mitigating circumstances you wish to disclose.

If you choose not to attend the meeting you will also lose the learning opportunity offered by the meeting. The panel use the meeting not only to discuss the allegation, but also as an opportunity to guide you in your practice and advise you of ways to avoid committing a repeat offence. Repeat offences are likely to incur a more severe penalty because it is assumed that the student is acting in full knowledge of the Regulations and has a good understanding of the importance of academic integrity.

You will be expected to address any gaps in your understanding of the requirements of academic integrity. There is plenty of support available and we strongly recommend that you take advantage of it.

What should I do now?

You must respond to the email sent to you inviting you to the panel meeting and:

1. Confirm that you will be attending the meeting. A calendar invitation and link to Microsoft Teams will then be sent to you; and
2. Submit your evidence to AcademicMisconduct@rhul.ac.uk **no later than 5pm the day before your meeting is due** to take place.

You are expected to respond to the invitation to confirm your attendance at least 24 hours before your meeting is due to take place.

We understand that receiving an allegation of this nature is a particularly anxious time and encourage you to seek guidance and support from the sources which are listed below. Further guidance can also be found on the [Academic Misconduct web-page](#) on the Student Intranet.

What will happen in the meeting?

The meeting will take place in the same way as all panel meetings and you are advised to read the Student Guidance for Academic Misconduct Panels located in your case file for detailed information. You will be questioned on your assessment and how you approached the work.

When will I find out the decision of the Panel?

Soon after the meeting the Academic Investigations team will email to let you know that a note summarising the meeting and what was discussed has been uploaded to your case file. You will be asked to approve the meeting notes for accuracy as quickly as possible. You will have the chance to note your own amendments or clarifications. However, the panel will not review any additional material or comments at this point.

Once you have replied to this email and approved the meeting notes you will receive email notification that a letter giving the panel's decision, the reason for it and the penalty, (if misconduct is found), has been uploaded to your case file.

As commissioning is considered a grave offence, if the panel determine that commissioning has occurred your case will be referred to a Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) to decide which penalty will be applied to your work. For more detailed information and guidance on what happens

when your case is referred to the PVC, you are advised to read the Student Guidance for Cases Referred to the Pro Vice-Chancellor located in your case file.



ACADEMIC SUPPORT

[Academic Regulations](#)

[SS1001: Academic Integrity](#) - Moodle course

[CeDAS](#) - Academic skills, including referencing and how to avoid plagiarism

[Library](#) - guidance and advice on referencing

Your Personal Tutor – contact your School Helpdesk for more info



WELLBEING SUPPORT

[Students Union Advice Centre](#) – independent advice about the case and support at the meeting

[Wellbeing Service](#) - can provide emotional support

[Disability & Neurodiversity Services](#) – register for support with any long term conditions or a specific learning difficulty