



Academic Misconduct Decision Letter

Date: *[Avoid sending when support services are closed, such as after business hours, the weekend, or on holidays]*

Dear *[student's name and V number]*,

Re: Academic Misconduct Decision

I have found that it was more likely than not that you committed academic misconduct in *[course name and number]* by *[List comprehensive and specific details of the misconduct]*. Below I will share with you the information I used to make this decision, the reasons why I decided misconduct was the most likely explanation, the penalty assigned to you, and the next steps.

Information I used:

1. The Policy on Academic Integrity *[Insert link to [undergraduate](#) or [graduate](#) policy]*
2. The course outline
3. A copy of the piece of work in question
4. The report from your instructor, which *[include details of the information provided by the instructor]*
5. The information you provided me in our meeting on *[date]*, where you:
 - *[List the student's evidence to demonstrate you understood their side of the story]*
6. *[Include any other sources of information used in your decision, such as AI detection reports, academic papers, research, or opinions from people you have consulted]*

Rationale:

Include a detailed explanation of how you came to the decision that it was more likely than not that the student committed the alleged misconduct. Show your rationale and how you reached the burden of proof. Show how you systematically assessed each piece of evidence. Pay attention particularly to conflicting evidence. You may want to ask yourself the following:

- *Did I start with an open mind? Was I open to having my mind changed?*
- *What confirms that misconduct was likely? What contradicts this conclusion?*
- *Does a piece of evidence directly prove something or do I need to make an assumption? How likely is this assumption true?*
- *How convincing is a piece of evidence? Is it corroborated or contradicted by other evidence?*
- *How reliable is a piece of evidence? Could there be mistakes?*
- *How credible is a source? Are there motivations to be untruthful or omit information?*
- *Do I have any biases that may be playing an unwarranted role?*

See Appendix "A" for an example of a fictional Rationale:

Penalty:

Be clear and indicate all aspects of the penalty. Include a detailed explanation of how you came to the decision about which penalty is appropriate. Consider the mitigative or aggravating factors and show how they contributed to your decision on which penalty was appropriate.

Next Steps:

If you have any questions about the process or potential outcomes, please refer to the Policy on Academic Integrity. You may also contact the UVic Ombudsperson, who is an impartial, independent, and confidential resource. You may appeal my decision to [*include the name, role, and contact information of the appeal body*] by [*include any deadlines set by the appeal body*]. If you have any questions about my decision, you may contact me. Please note that I will be unlikely to change my decision, unless there is new information that you could not have reasonably presented to me before I made my decision.

I acknowledge that this situation may be stressful and I encourage you to reach out for support from Student Wellness or use SupportConnect, which is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

Regards,

[*your name, role, and contact information*]

Appendix "A": Example of a Fictional Rationale Section

You registered and attended COURSE in the spring semester of YEAR. During this time the Policy on Academic Integrity was published in the Academic Calendar and you were expected to abide by it. At the beginning of the course, the instructor provided you with a course outline that contained the following: *"Students are required to abide by all academic regulations set out in the University calendar, including standards of academic integrity. Using any form of Artificial Intelligence for your exams or assignments is prohibited. If you are unsure what may be prohibited, please consult me before submitting an exam or assignment."*

On DATE, you were assigned a final exam for COURSE 101. This exam was a take-home exam and the exam instructions on the front cover prohibited the use of any sources other than your textbook and your lecture notes. You submitted the exam on April 11, 2024 by email to your instructor.

On DATE, your instructor sent me an email indicating that they suspected that you used artificial intelligence to write the introduction and conclusion of the exam. Your instructor included the final exam in question and also your midterm exam, which he used to compare your writing styles. I found this to be a good comparator, because the midterm exam was taken under the same conditions (i.e. take-home, the same sources prohibited). After I examined the midterm exam and the introduction and conclusion of your final exam, I concluded that they appeared to be written by a different author or someone with a different style or knowledge base. On your final exam, I found several words that were unusual for the undergraduate level (such as juxtaposition, notwithstanding, and albeit). In comparison to the other sections of your final exam, the sentence structure, and word choice appeared to be different. However, I did not find this comparison exercise to be determinative and wanted to hear from you for further clarity.

On DATE, we met and you provided me with some important information that helped me make the determination that misconduct was the likely explanation.

- When I asked you to explain to me what the word juxtaposition meant, you showed hesitancy and after some time provided the answer "it means a like a position, or where something is." This was incorrect, as juxtaposition refers to a comparison. I found that it was unlikely that you would have known how to use the word correctly in your final exam but then be unable to explain its meaning one week later. This instance made me believe that the misconduct was the most likely explanation.
- When asked what was your biggest difficulty during the final exam, you stated that it was completing all the questions in time. I cannot reconcile the fact that you have a well-written 205 word conclusion that repeats many points in the body of the question with your statement that you were under time pressure. The conflict between these two facts leads me to believe that misconduct was the most likely explanation.
- When I asked you to explain why it appears that your writing, syntax, and word choice had improved greatly from your midterm exam, you said "I studied hard and spent around 12 hours straight studying the material for the exam." Although you may have been able to improve your course knowledge with this, this answer did not demonstrate how you improved your *writing* during this period. I followed up this question with a question about the difference in writing level between the introduction/conclusion and the other section of the exam. In response to this question, you said "I don't know." Although it is plausible that you improved your writing to such an extent between the midterm exam and the final exam and then chose to use those improved skills only in the introduction and conclusion sections, I find this explanation unlikely.
- Your final exam made reference to NAME OF SCHOLAR in your introduction. After looking through the course syllabus I saw no mention of this scholar. When I asked you about this scholar and why you chose to

include them in your introduction, you hesitated and after some time said that “It seemed like it would fit in there, you know, because he was an expert.” When I asked if this scholar was included anywhere in the course materials or mentioned during class, you said “I don’t remember. I don’t think so though.” When I asked where you got this information about this scholar, you said “I don’t remember.” I asked your instructor if this scholar was mentioned in class or in the materials, and he indicated to me that the scholar was not. I do not find it likely that you would be able to recall this scholar and place her work in your final exam correctly, but then not recall any more information — or only general information — one week later.

- After examining the contents of your final exam, I found several errors in other sections. The word ‘received’ was misspelled as ‘recieved’ in three instances (para 4, 6, and 7). However, in the introduction, the word ‘received’ was spelled correctly. These types of errors I would find normal under exam conditions. When asked about this discrepancy, you said “I’m not sure.” This discrepancy leads me to believe that it was likely that you did not write the introduction section and rather used an outside source, such as AI, as it would be unlikely that you consistently misspelled a word in other sections but then correctly in another.

Overall, I find the information indicating misconduct was compelling and I find your explanations unlikely. I find that misconduct was likely in your case and you likely used an outside source (such as AI) prohibited by the exam instructions, the course syllabus, and the Policy on Academic Integrity.