

HOW 1-1 ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE CAN ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

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The following principles of academic integrity are crucial for students while writing any academic report:

- Do your own work
- Produce original work, and not engage in plagiarism
- Cite relevant sources and reference them correctly
- Do not seek unfair learning advantage (such as additional paid support for assignments) from external sources

However, students need help, particularly in an online learning environment that provides limited peer to peer interactions. It is natural for students to seek assistance to better understand assignment requirements, or the underlying academic concepts, as well as receive inputs on academic writing or referencing. Unfortunately, sometimes in their quest to succeed, students do resort to unscrupulous means to complete their assignments or gain an unfair advantage.

In such a scenario, a university-endorsed Academic Coach provides a legitimate way to seek guidance. This has to be a trained academic expert available to students to help improve the quality of their assignments while preserving the originality of the student's work. An Academic Coach is useful to students by providing legitimate assignment-related help in the following ways:

- **Conceptual understanding** – In the absence of classroom-based teaching, an Academic Coach can discuss concepts and share learnings in one- to-one interactions. From personal experience, I have seen that students start considering dropping out of the course when they do not have access to clarifying their academic queries promptly and conveniently.
- Keeping **students on track** with assessment timelines –

Most of the students who take up online degree courses are also working professionals. Sometimes work and personal commitments take precedence and students miss important deadlines. Regular interactions with an Academic Coach provide them with time-management related guidance and keep them on track.

- **Academic writing** – Many students return to academic studies after a long duration and are not aware of the principles of academic writing. An Academic Coach emphasises on the importance of logical construction of an argument with evidence and relevant references wherever possible. They provide insights to students to be able to apply the theoretical concepts learned during the course to their assignment problems. An Academic Coach also makes the students aware of the pitfalls of plagiarism and helps with correct referencing.
- **Relevant analysis** – An Academic Coach provides an overall perspective on the assignment expectations. Constructive feedback about the quality of the assignment can motivate students to put more academic rigour into their submissions and significantly elevate the quality of their work.

By developing students' understanding of the desired learning outcomes, providing them with reliable (but controlled guidance) on their assessment task prior to submission and building their confidence in submitting their own work without fear of failure, universities can create a system that incentivises them to seek guidance from reliable sources and avoid falling into the trap of seeking easy solutions through illegal means. Academic misconduct is a bane of the industry and a proactive approach from universities can help minimise it. ■