

Degree cheating on the rise since tuition fee hike

Postgraduate academic misconduct nearly doubled in a two year period

By [Chris Owen](#), Editor (2015/16)

Tuesday 4 October 2016



Academic misconduct – the collective term for incidences of plagiarism, collusion, exam cheating and fraud – almost doubled among York postgraduates in 2014 and among undergraduates in 2013, a *Nouse* investigation has found.

The proportion of the undergraduate student body found to have committed a form of misconduct rose by 78 per cent between the academic years 12/13 and 13/14. Between 13/14 and 14/15, the proportion of taught postgraduates in breach of rules rose by 93 per cent.

Academic misconduct had overall been on the decline since 2005, but began to rise again in 2012 – the same year that saw the introduction of the £9000 a year tuition fee.

The overall numbers reached a 10 year real-terms high in 14/15, though the proportion of students found to be guilty of a form of misconduct has stayed relatively low, with only 0.85 per cent of the taught student body breaching rules. However the proportion of the taught student body in breach increased by a half in the five year period since 2010, when the figure sat at just 0.57 per cent. The data for 15/16 is not yet available.

The timing of the rise correlates with evidence showing an increase in students seeking support for stress-related conditions since the 12/13 fee increase for UK students. A report from the Higher Education Funding Council for England found a “rapid and dramatic increase” in students seeking mental health support; it cited “greater financial and academic pressures on students leading to problems emerging during studies” as one of a number of central factors.

In a statement on behalf of the University, Pro-Vice Chancellor John Robinson said it was “likely” that the increase in academic misconduct at York was down to a new system of reportage, rather than greater financial or academic pressures.

“It is likely that the increase in reported cases of academic misconduct was due to the introduction, in 12/13, of a revised Academic Misconduct policy,” Robinson told *Nouse*. “One of the major changes in this policy was the introduction of Standing Academic Misconduct Panels (StAMP), which contained academics from across the faculty where the case had been raised.”

The University’s aim in introducing the StAMPS was, according to Robinson, to increase consistency and regulation across departments. However a side-effect was that misconduct cases “could not be dealt with ‘in-house’, i.e. within the home department without flagging the case to the University.

“Under the old policy, there were departments which had not ‘officially’ had any cases for several years, but certainly they were dealing with cases internally.”

YUSU Academic Officer Tamaki Laycock commented: “Although academic misconduct is never desirable, the pressure to do better when you’re being saddled with increasing fees is a reality. I believe much of the pressure comes from heavier debts as well as the increasingly difficult job market where just an undergraduate degree won’t cut it anymore.

“I also believe this is why it’s even more important now to work with the University and all departments to make sure that students feel comfortable voicing their concerns with particularly challenging work, or systematic hurdles that may face them. To build this system of trust is imperative if we want to make sure students are confident enough to submit their own work.”



Most Read Discussed

1. [What is the difference between tax evasion and tax avoidance?](#)
2. [Penalty for submitting work up to an hour late halved](#)
3. [Study reveals spending habits of students](#)
4. [Academic censorship at Reading University](#)
5. [Massive power cut hits homes and train station](#)
6. [YUSU to hold referendum on policy of supporting second EU referendum](#)

Write for Nouse News

[Get in touch with the editors](#)

[Join the Facebook group](#)

More in News

[Penalty for submitting work up to an hour late halved](#)

[Massive power cut hits homes and train station](#)

[YUSU to hold referendum on policy of supporting second EU referendum](#)

[A Viking Theatre for York](#)

[Annual Student Housing survey to close soon](#)

[Volunteering Week](#)

- [About Nouse](#)
- [Who's Nouse](#)
- [Website Credits](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Student Discounts](#)
- [Print Editions](#)
- [Mini-Sites](#)
- [Nouse on Twitter](#)
- [Nouse on Facebook](#)
- [Nouse on Google+](#)

© 1964–2018 Nouse

[Policies](#) |

