

Academic Offences

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Academic Offences

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The College has a public duty to ensure that the highest standards are maintained in the conduct of assessment. Thus, the legitimate interests of the students and the College's reputation are safeguarded. Alleged academic offences which would compromise the standards will be investigated thoroughly. If confirmed, an offence will lead to the imposition of severe consequences, including the possibility of termination of registration and enrolment i.e. expulsion.
- 1.2 An "academic offence" has been committed when a student tries to gain improper advantage for her/himself by breaking or not following, the Academic Regulations concerning any part of the assessment process. This procedure applies to all students engaged in any College assessment activity whether on or offsite including collaborative programmes.
- 1.3 This procedure is intended to help students to reach a clear understanding of Academic Regulations and to put minor misunderstandings right before they become serious.

- 1.4 Students who are subject to this procedure are encouraged to take advantage of the advice and support available to them from the Students' Support. At all stages of this procedure students have the right to be accompanied by a friend or fellow classmate who is not acting in a professional capacity
- 1.5 Certain professional bodies impose their own standards of professional conduct. If a student does not keep to those rules or standards they may not gain professional recognition regardless of learning achievement.

2 Categories of Academic Offence

2.1 Plagiarism:

- i. An offence occurs when a student submits as her/his own, work of which s/he is not the author.
- ii. Plagiarism has occurred when the student:
 - Does not acknowledge the work of another person or persons, or
 - Has not identified the source or cited quotations in any work presented for assessment, or
 - Has used images, music, video, patents or other creative materials without acknowledgement of their provenance, or
 - Has copied another student's work without their knowledge, or
 - Has submitted the same piece of their own work for assessment and award of credit in two (or more) modules.

If a student's work is found to contain verbatim (or near verbatim) quotations from the work of others without acknowledgement, then plagiarism has been committed.

2.2 Collusion:

- i. Where there is a requirement for the submitted work to be solely that of an individual student, collaboration is not permitted. Students who improperly work together in these circumstances and/or who permit the copying of their work by others are guilty of collusion.
- ii. Where students are permitted or instructed to work together to achieve common outcomes, such group activity is regarded as approved collaboration. There may be a requirement for each student to identify her/his own contribution

2.3 Impersonation:

- i. A student who is substituted by another person in an examination, or who submits by substitution the work of another person as her or his own, is guilty of deception by impersonation. The offence of impersonation can be applied both to the student and the impersonator.

2.4 Improper conduct in formal examinations:

- i. An offence is committed when a student possesses unauthorised paper, material or electronic devices such as mobile phones, programmable calculators or electronic dictionaries, or communicates with another student during an examination.
- ii. If on entry to the examination room students find themselves inadvertently in possession of any such material or device they must declare and surrender it immediately prior to the start of the examination.
- iii. An offence is also committed if there is evidence of the use of unauthorised material in a student's response(s) to examination questions.
- iv. Students will be deemed to be aware of all regulations governing the conduct of examinations (Section H). Breaches of any of these regulations will constitute an academic offence.

2.5 Any other form of deception:

- i. Any action through which students seek to gain an unfair advantage in assessment constitutes an academic offence.
- ii. The use of essay-writing services

3 Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences

3.1 Breaches of examination room regulations

Following report to the Assessment and Awards Manager by the invigilator, a fixed penalty will apply unless the breach of exam room regulations may be shown to have resulted in the student gaining an unfair advantage when the case will be referred to the Programme Leader for consideration.

3.2 All other offences

3.2.1 Step 1: Programme leader or nominee Meeting:

Where a tutor suspects that an Academic Offence has taken place s/he reports it to the programme leader or nominee (except in the case of deception or invention of data, which will be reported to the relevant Programme Leader (Step 2) by any member of staff).

- (i) The Programme leader or nominee holds a meeting with the student in order to establish whether an offence has been committed or not, whether the offence has arisen from inexperience or misunderstanding, and the effect of the offence on academic standards.
- (ii) If the offence was committed as a result of inexperience or misunderstanding the outcome of this meeting is an advisory note placed on the student's file clarifying academic regulations. Any action to be taken to address the issues identified will be noted within the advisory note and subsequently monitored by the Programme leader or nominee. A copy of the advisory note will be given to the student and a copy held in the Quality Office on the student file for reference in any future investigation.
- (iii) If the offence is judged not to be the result of inexperience and misunderstanding, the student will be referred to the relevant Programme Leader with overall responsibility for her/his programme or module (Step 2). The student will be informed of this in writing.
- (iv) If the offence is one of plagiarism which has been admitted by the student, the Programme leader or nominee will determine whether there are any factors that make it a significant threat to academic standards. These would include an element of collusion, impersonation, systematic and widespread plagiarism or repeat offending. If the offence amounts to a serious threat to academic standards, the student will be referred to the relevant Programme Leader with overall responsibility for her/his programme or module (Step 2). The student will be informed of this in writing.
- (v) Where a student admits the offence of plagiarism, but there are none of the factors outlined in 3.2.1 the Programme leader or nominee will implement a penalty in line with 4.1 (ii) and 4.1(iii).

3.2.2 Step 2: Meeting with the relevant Programme Leader

- (i) The relevant Programme Leader or nominee holds a meeting with the student in order to consider the evidence and to determine the appropriate course of action. Where the offence being investigated is felt to be systematic and widespread, representation of an experienced independent person from

outside of the College/Department will be sought. Details of the meeting will be recorded by a relevant officer.

- (ii)** The student will be given written notice of the time and place of the meeting, a clear statement of the nature of the alleged academic offence, and supporting evidence. The period of notice will be at least 7 days but may be reduced or increased with the agreement of the student, in the interests of natural justice. In the event that the student fails to respond to a request to meet with the Programme Leader the meeting will be concluded in the student's absence on the basis of any information available.
- (iii)** The student is entitled to bring a friend who should be a member of the College, such as a class representative. The friend may make representations on the student's behalf with permission of the Programme Leader. Details of anyone accompanying the student must be notified to the Programme Leader at least 4 days before the meeting. This process is internal therefore it is not expected that students will bring legal representation to such meetings.
- (iv)** Copies of any written material to be submitted to the meeting by the reporting Module Leader or nominee and the names of any witnesses to be called by the Programme Leader or nominee holding the meeting must be made available to the student at least 4 days before the meeting unless these time periods are reduced with the agreement of the student.
- (v)** The Module Leader will present a summary of the investigation to date.
- (vi)** The student is entitled to call witnesses and to present evidence to the meeting. Copies of any written material to be submitted to the meeting, and the names of witnesses to be called by the student must be made available to the Programme Leader or nominee holding the meeting at least four days before the meeting unless the Programme Leader agrees to reduce this time period or accept information at the meeting.
- (vii)** Witnesses will be asked to leave the meeting once their evidence has been presented and questioned. Once all the evidence has been heard, the Programme Leader or nominee holding the meeting may ask the student and her/his friend to leave the meeting whilst a decision is reached.
- (viii)** The Programme Leader or nominee will make themselves aware of current guidance available and may impose one of the consequences set out in section 4.1i-vii. The outcomes of the meeting will normally be communicated to the student immediately after the meeting. This will also be notified to the student in writing, with a copy placed on file and copied to the Quality Office, and may be taken into account in any subsequent offence hearings. All decisions will be reported to the relevant Assessment Board.
- (ix)** If, exceptionally, the Programme Leader is unable to reach a decision without further advice/consultation s/he will inform the student of an

anticipated date by which the decision will be given. This will normally be no longer than 5 working days after the meeting. If the Programme Leader is still unable to reach a decision the case will be referred to be heard by an Academic Offence Panel (Step 3).

- (x)** If the nature of the offence warrants it, the Programme Leader or nominee may also, depending on the nature of the offence, invoke either the College Disciplinary Procedure against the student.
- (xi)** If the student is reasonably dissatisfied with the outcome of the meeting with the Programme leader, an appeal may be lodged through the procedures detailed in Section 5.

3.3 Step 3: Formal Academic offence panel. A formal academic offence panel may be convened where the Programme Leader is unable to reach a conclusion.

Constitution of the Panel:

- (i) The Panel will consist of three members of the College, together with a secretary:
 - Chair: The Academic Offence Panel will be chaired by principal. The Chair must not have been involved in the assessment of the student nor as Chair of the relevant Assessment Board nor in any prior investigation of the alleged academic offence.
 - Membership: Two other members drawn from Academic Board or Quality and Standard Committee. They must not have been involved in the assessment of the student, the Assessment Board nor in any prior investigation of the alleged academic offence.
 - Secretary: The Director of Quality or nominee.
- (ii) The Panel may be advised by the Chair of the appropriate Assessment Board on assessment issues but s/he has no voting rights.
- (iii)** The Principal or nominee is responsible for ensuring that there is proper separation of responsibilities within the panel.

The conduct of the Academic Offence Panel:

- (iv) Hearings will be held in order to consider evidence, decide whether an academic offence has been committed and if so the nature of its effect on academic standards, and to determine the appropriate course of action.
- (v) The student will be given written notice of the time and place of the hearing and a clear statement of the nature of the alleged academic offence. The period of notice is at least 21 days but may be reduced or increased with the agreement of the student and in the interests of natural justice. The

student is entitled to bring a friend who is not acting in a professional capacity. The friend may make representations on the student's behalf with permission of the Chair. Details of anyone accompanying the student must be notified to the Chair at least 7 days in advance of the meeting. In the event that the student fails to respond to a request to attend an Academic Offence Panel Hearing, the hearing will be concluded in the student's absence.

- (vi) Copies of any written materials to be submitted to the meeting by the reporting Programme Leader and the names of any witnesses to be called by the Chair of the hearing must be made available to the student at least 7 days before the hearing unless these time periods are reduced with the agreement of the student.
- (vii) The case will be presented by the reporting Programme Leader or nominee.
- (viii) The student is also entitled to call witnesses and to present evidence to the hearing. Copies of any written material to be submitted to the hearing and the names of witnesses to be called by the student, must be made available to the Chair of the hearing at least 7 days before the hearing unless the Chair agrees to reduce this time period or accept information at the hearing.
- (ix) Witnesses will be asked to leave the hearing once their evidence has been presented and questioned. Once all the evidence has been heard the Chair of the hearing may ask the student and her/his friend to leave the hearing whilst a decision is reached.
- (x) The Panel will reach its decision as to whether an offence has been committed or not by simple majority vote with the Chair having a casting vote: the Secretary to the Panel is not entitled to vote. The Panel will make itself aware of current guidance available and may invoke consequences as set out in section 4.1(i)–(vii). The Panel will then report its decision to the relevant Assessment Board and to the Quality office who will communicate the outcome to the student in writing.

4 Consequences of Committing an Academic Offence

4.1 The following outcomes may be used when an academic offence has been found to have been committed. The severity of the penalty is dependent on details of the case.

- (i) An advisory note. This will normally include further action to be undertaken relating to study skills and/or support to address the lack of understanding/inexperience. This will be confirmed to the student in writing, copied to the programme leader or nominee for implementation and monitoring.
- (ii) A written warning stating that any further offences committed while the student is registered with the College will normally lead to termination of

registration and enrolment. All formal/written warnings are issued through the Quality office. The outcome may be taken into account in any subsequent hearings.

A written warning will accompany the consequences listed in points (iii) to (v) below:

- (iii) Where the effect of the offence on academic standards is limited the assignment(s)/examination in which the offence occurred will be failed and a numerical grade of 0 (Zero) is recorded. The student will be permitted to resubmit with the final assignment/examination mark limited to a minimum pass mark (40%). The student is expected to submit the referral/sit the referral exam. If the student elects not to resubmit, the overall mark for the module they take to make up the credit deficit will be limited to 40%. Where the offence is committed on a referral the module will be failed and the student will be allowed to retake the module (subject to programme specific regulations) with the appropriate assignment/examination mark limited to a minimum pass mark. If the student elects to take a different module to make up the credit deficit, that module will be limited to the minimum pass mark.
- (iv) Where an offence is deemed to be more serious threatening the maintenance of academic standards, the module(s) in which the offence(s) occurred will be failed and a numerical grade of 0 (Zero) recorded. The student will be allowed to retake the module(s) with the final module grade limited to a minimum pass mark except where consequence 4.1(vi) is also given. If the student elects to take a different module to make up the credit deficit, that module will be limited to the minimum pass mark.
- (v) All credits earned in concurrent modules may, at the Programme Leader or Panel's discretion, be suspended with the student being required to retake the modules in order to gain the credits necessary for the stage/award. The grades recorded for these modules will be the lower of the original grade or that achieved on re-assessment.
- (vi) Where the offence is found to be widespread and systematic or as a result of impersonation or the use of an essay-writing service, termination of the student's registration, cancellation of enrolment and the annulment of all assessments for concurrent modules will normally be recommended. Termination normally prevents a student from applying for further study for a period of two full calendar years. For further details see section D1.5.
- (vii) The Quality and Standard Committee, on behalf of Academic Board, may on the basis of evidence presented to it instigate a review of credit previously obtained by students who have committed a serious offence. If the Committee concludes that any or all of such credits were not properly earned, it may recommend to Academic Board that they be cancelled.
- (viii) The record will be taken into account in any subsequent offence hearings or in giving any reference on behalf of the student and UCAS may be informed.

4.2 Impersonation:

- (i) Impersonation will normally result in point 4.1 (vi) for the students involved either as the impersonator or the person knowingly impersonated.
- (ii) Where the accomplice is a member of the University, but not an enrolled student, disciplinary action will be taken.

4.3 Repeat Offences

- (i) Where a student is found to have committed any further offence after a previous written warning a consequence of termination will normally apply to the student. This may also include failure and removal of credit of concurrent modules.

4.4 Offences found after an Award has been made.

- (i) Where an individual is found to have committed an academic offence after they have been conferred with an award, the College reserves the right ask the relevant awarding body to revoke the award. If the result of the Academic Offence Panel is to recommend the revocation of the award, this recommendation will be submitted for final ratification to Academic Board. All award documentation including the Award Certificate will become invalid, reference requests to the College and electronic records will be updated to show that no valid award exists. Attempted use of previously issued documentation will normally amount to deception.

5 Academic Offence Appeals

5.1 Right to Appeal:

- (i) Students have the right to appeal against the outcome of a Dean's/Director's meeting, an Academic Offence Panel Hearing or fixed penalty decision.
- (ii) An appeal will only be allowed if new evidence is available and/or it can be shown that the correct procedures were not followed.
- (iii) Appeals must be submitted to the Registrar, in writing, within 14 days of written notification of the outcome following the meeting, hearing or fixed penalty decision, explaining the reasons for the appeal.
- (iv) The Registrar (or nominee) will consider whether there are grounds for appeal. Where an appeal has been accepted an Offence Appeal Panel will be convened to consider the case.

5.2 Hearing the Appeal The Offence Appeal Panel will be constituted and operate in the same way as the Academic Offence Panel (Section 3.3) but will consist of different members of the University if the appeal results from a decision made by an Academic Offence Panel.

5.3 Outcome of the Appeal:

- (i) The outcome of an appeal can be to confirm or amend the original decision and may confirm or reduce the original consequence(s).
- (ii) The appeal decision is final.

6 Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

In the event that the appellant rejects the outcome of the appeal, s/he may request an independent review of the process by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). In order to do so the student must obtain a Completion of Procedures letter from the College or (where relevant) the awarding body. This confirms that the institution has completed consideration of the case through local procedures. In such circumstances, the student should forward a completed Scheme Application Form to the OIA, who will review the appeal independently in due course.

Scheme Application Forms are available from the OIA at: Office of the Independent Adjudicator, Email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk Website: www.oiahe.org.uk

The End