

UK Graduate College

Academic Misconduct Policy, Procedure and Guidance

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Related Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment Policy • Examinations Policy • Student Conduct Policy and Procedure
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Who does this policy apply to?

If you are...	Then..
On a programme leading to an award from ATHE, City and Guild or Pearson	All parts of this policy apply

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Those studying with UK Graduate College (UKGC) are expected to follow accepted academic practice when submitting work for assessment. Accepted academic practice is that any information, data, visuals, ideas, commentary or other content not created by the author should be attributed to its source(s), even when that content may be adapted in some way. The only exception to this is what is termed 'common knowledge' or a widely held truth
- 1.2 Accepted academic practice also includes an expectation that where an author uses their own previous work (and this includes a student's earlier coursework submissions), this should also be attributed to the original source.

- 1.3 Academic misconduct refers to any deliberate act or practice which compromises or threatens to compromise the process and integrity of assessment, and as a result the validity of the result or certification awarded.
- 1.4 Academic misconduct also refers to any non-deliberate activity, neglect, default or other practice which compromises or threatens to compromise the process and integrity of assessment, and as a result the validity of the result or certification awarded.
- 1.5 It is the responsibility of all College staff and students to be vigilant with regard to any events which may lead to academic misconduct occurring, and report promptly to the HE Academic Quality Manager where they suspect academic misconduct has or may occur so that appropriate action can be taken to address this.
- 1.6 The HE Academic Quality Manager is responsible for notifying relevant awarding bodies of cases of alleged/actual academic misconduct and maladministration to ensure the appropriate action may be taken.

2. Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 This policy aims to uphold the integrity and value of the awards achieved by students at UK Graduate College (UKGC) by identifying and investigating any academic misconduct.
- 2.2 Academic misconduct is unacceptable as it means that one (or more) student(s) will have an unfair advantage over others but, more importantly, it undermines the value of all awards. It is therefore treated very seriously, and a process has been established to deal consistently with reported cases. This includes formal reports of infringements of the examination rules from invigilators, the use of detection software and the appointment of a Principal Academic Misconduct Investigator. The Principle Academic Misconduct Investigator, or their nominee, will lead in the investigation of the more severe categories of suspected academic misconduct. The role of Principal Academic Misconduct Investigator will be determined on a case-by-case basis to ensure no conflict of interest.

3. Aims and Objectives

- to minimise the risk of academic misconduct by students;
- to standardise and record any investigation to ensure openness and fairness;
- to impose appropriate penalties and/or sanctions on students where incidents (or attempted incidents) are proven;
- to protect the integrity of the College and awarding bodies.

3.1 In order to do this, the College will:

- minimise the risk of academic misconduct by students;
- standardise and record any investigation to ensure openness and fairness;
- impose appropriate penalties and/or sanctions on students where incidents (or attempted incidents) are proven;
- protect the integrity of the College and awarding bodies.

3.2 To achieve this, the College will:

- Communicate the Academic Misconduct Policy to students through the website, during induction, and in programme handbooks;
- communicate the Academic Misconduct Policy to teaching and support staff during induction;
- show students the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources;
- ask students to declare that their work is their own;
- conduct any investigations in a form commensurate with the nature of any allegation;
- ensure the handling of individual cases takes account of the needs of the individual, including those arising from protected characteristics.

3.3 All Students are expected to:

- attend induction
- attend study skills sessions that are relevant to developing their note-taking, paraphrasing, synthesising and referencing skills;
- avoid sharing electronic versions of their work and passwords with other students;
- only submit work for assessment that is their own original work.

3.4 All Assessors are expected to:

- declare any conflict of interest;
- communicate the Academic Misconduct Policy to students during course induction with emphasis on plagiarism and essay mills;
- keep candidate coursework/portfolios of evidence secure;

- work within the professional teaching standards in relation to assessment practices;
- check for academic misconduct when assessing or moderating work;
- comply with awarding bodies procedures;

3.5 All Centre Staff are expected to:

- declare any conflict of interest;
- comply with the invigilation code of practice;
- communicate the Academic Misconduct Policy to students during induction;
- comply with awarding bodies procedures;

4. Academic Misconduct Categories

4.1 Table 1 outlines the misconduct categories and the associated penalty that would normally be applied, as well as the outline processes for dealing with each category. As the penalty for academic misconduct may result in a direct and significant impact on a student's ability to proceed with their studies, the burden of proof rests with the College for each category of academic misconduct. The list in Table 1 is not exhaustive and other instances of academic misconduct may be considered by the College at its discretion.

4.2 A student (singly or in conjunction with others) who is considered to have violated expectations of acceptable practice will be penalised, with the severity of the penalty determined by whether they are deemed to have committed any of the following:

- minor academic misconduct
- major academic misconduct
- gross academic misconduct

4.3 The indicative behaviour categories incorporate the following considerations:

- prior experience of the student, taking into account the guidance that has been made available to them;
- nature or seriousness of the misconduct (ranging from, for example, incomplete or inconsistent citation through to using another's work with no attribution);
- impact of the misconduct on the work (ranging from, for example, a few lines of limited consequence to the assessment criteria, to a large proportion which significantly relates to the assessment criteria);

- intention of the student to deceive (ranging from, for example, no intention to deceive but carelessness in using correct paraphrasing and citation conventions, to acting fraudulently [eg falsifying reference sources or data, using another student's work without their permission or taking notes into a closed-book examination]);
- record of previous misconduct.

5. Guidance on Academic Misconduct categories

5.1 The following guidance will enable tutors to judge which category best describes any suspected misconduct, as follows:

5.1.1 Minor Academic Misconduct

- a. less than 25% of the assessed work was involved or the misconduct occurred in a part of the work of lesser importance in relation to the assessment marking criteria;
- b. the misconduct arose solely from poorly applied citation conventions, including the absence or incorrect use of quotation marks where other's words are reproduced, as opposed to the inclusion of unattributed material;
- c. the misconduct occurred early in the student's HE studies or there is another well-founded reason to suppose that the student did not understand academic conventions;
- d. there is no indication that the student had intent to gain unfair advantage;
- e. there is no prior record of the student having committed any category of academic misconduct.

5.1.2 Major Academic Misconduct

As minor academic misconduct but more serious infringement demonstrated by:

- a. between 25% to 50% of the assessed work was involved;
- b. the misconduct arose from the inclusion of unattributed material, as opposed, solely, to the misuse of citation conventions;
- c. there is no reasonable reason to suppose that the student did not understand academic conventions and the need to declare where work is substantially that of another (be it published or from other sources including friend, family, employer or another student);
- d. there is a record of the student having previously committed minor academic misconduct.

5.1.3 Gross Academic Misconduct

As major academic misconduct but more serious infringement demonstrated by:

- a. more than 50% of the assessed work was involved;
- b. the misconduct occurred in an important part of the work, in relation to the assessment marking criteria;
- c. there is a reasonable indication that the student had sought to gain an unfair advantage;
- d. there is a prior record of the student having previously committed academic major misconduct;
- e. being in possession of unauthorised items/materials during an examination.

6. Investigation process for students

6.1 The Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure details the process, timescales for actions and the named members of staff with responsibility for discussing matters with the student and conducting the investigation. The policy also states which group in the organisation hears the case and has responsibility for determining the sanctions to be imposed, where academic misconduct is proven. Records of all possible irregularities and investigations should be retained by the centre. The sanctions that can be imposed must be stated in the academic misconduct policy

Identification

6.2 Where a member of staff suspects academic misconduct, they should record the details on the Academic Misconduct Report Form and submit this to the Programme Leader, who is then responsible for assessing the severity of the alleged academic misconduct and deciding whether to take further action as outlined below.

6.3 Table 1 shall be used to determine the severity of the alleged academic misconduct as to whether it constitutes as a minor or serious offence. In deciding the severity of the penalty for a minor or serious offence, the Panel who will undertake the hearing will normally take the following mitigating factors into consideration:

- The number and seriousness of any previous offences
- Whether the student has admitted to the offence at the earliest opportunity
- Whether the student has expressed remorse
- Whether the student has a compelling personal circumstance that affected their judgement.

Table A: Academic Misconduct categories and associated arrangements

Category of misconduct	Burden and Standard of Proof	Associated normal penalty	Dealt with by	Student can appeal to
Minor academic misconduct	The College to establish proof on the balance of probabilities	Possibility of reduced, fail or zero mark awarded for the piece of work and a written warning	Programme Leader	Chair of Academic Misconduct Panel
Major academic misconduct	The College to establish proof on the balance of probabilities	Fail/zero marks for the module with opportunity to be reassessed	Programme Leader in consultation with the Principal Academic Misconduct investigator	Chair of Academic Misconduct Panel
Gross academic misconduct	The College to establish proof on the balance of probabilities	Ranges from failure of module with no entitlement to reassessment through to failure of all modules in the year and withdrawal	Programme Leader, Principal Academic Misconduct Investigator and Academic Misconduct Panel	via Appeals Policy and Procedure

Informal warnings

6.4 Where the Programme Leader believes that there was no intent to deceive, an informal warning may be issued to the student.

6.5 Informal warnings must not be issued where an offence that would normally be classed as 'serious' has occurred, or where prior informal warnings and/or academic misconduct has been recorded.

6.6 Informal warnings should be recorded on the student's record and the Programme Leader should arrange for the student to receive appropriate training/advice on how to avoid committing academic misconduct in the future.

Minor and Serious offences

6.7 Where the Programme Leader determines that the alleged offence relates to poor scholarship and the student is in their first year of study, and this is the first allegation, they can give an informal warning, recorded in the students file, and refer the student to study support. If the Programme Leader concludes that a minor academic offence has occurred on the balance of probabilities, they are able to issue a formal warning which may be reported to the Awarding Body, and direction to written guidance by Module Leader and note to student record database and file

- 6.8 Where the Programme Leader determines that a major gross academic misconduct offence may have occurred, they will request a Principal Academic Misconduct Investigator, completing the form attached to this policy, including a short report explaining why major or gross misconduct is suspected, a copy of the work under suspicion and a copy of the assignment brief and the Turnitin originality report.
- 6.9 If the Principal Academic Misconduct Investigator agrees that the case could be considered as a major academic misconduct offence (rather than gross misconduct), they will arrange to meet with the student, normally within three weeks of the identification of the alleged offence. The Principal Academic Misconduct Investigator will have further discussions with the module tutor and relevant internal examiner before coming to a decision and recommending a penalty to the Assessment Board.
- 6.10 Where the Programme Leader and Principal Academic Misconduct Officer agree that the work falls into the gross academic misconduct category, the student will be informed that the work has been submitted for investigation by sending them a message stating “Your submission has been passed to the Principal Academic Misconduct Investigator to consider whether it demonstrates gross academic misconduct. You will receive an invitation to discuss this matter with them shortly.” The work should have been marked without consideration of the suspected academic misconduct and this should be returned to the student, with a reminder that “the grade is provisional and assumes that the work has been produced within normal academic practice expectations”
- 6.11 The student(s) will be informed in writing a minimum of 5 working days prior to the date of the meeting, of the following:
- 6.11.1 Details of the suspected academic misconduct, including the work under consideration and what kind of misconduct is suspected or alleged; the membership of the panel; and their right to be accompanied at the meeting by a friend or representative (non-legal representative).
 - 6.11.2 The role of the meeting is to a) determine whether the academic misconduct has occurred and b) where it is determined that academic misconduct has occurred, to recommend to the relevant Assessment Board both that a penalty should be applied and what that penalty should be.
- 6.12 In order to determine whether academic misconduct has occurred, the hearing provides an opportunity for the student to:
- a. understand and clarify the suspected academic misconduct;
 - b. to accept they have committed the academic misconduct;
 - c. to contest or rebut the case against them.

6.13 Where more than one student is involved in the academic misconduct, the students must be invited to attend separate hearings and decisions should not be made until all hearings have been held.

6.14 Hearing Panel Members

- Programme Leader
- Another member of academic staff (not the person who assessed the work/invigilated the examination).
- The HE Academic Quality Manager to advise on policy and procedural matters and be responsible for the official record of the hearing.

The Hearing

6.15 The Academic Misconduct panel will meet in private to discuss the issues pertinent to the students case.

6.16 The student and Advisor (current student) if appropriate, will be invited to join the panel meeting.

6.17 The chair will set out the reasons why there is a suspicion of gross academic misconduct, making reference to supporting evidence. The panel will ask the student questions in order to clarify issues.

6.18 If the student accepts they have committed academic misconduct in the work under consideration, the hearing shall be adjourned for the panel to consider the appropriate outcome.

6.19 If the student contests the evidence, then the panel should consider the student's comments and then adjourn to determine whether academic misconduct has taken place, and to consider the appropriate outcome. The standard of proof under this procedure will be the balance of probabilities. This means that the panel must be satisfied that, on the evidence available, academic misconduct was more likely to have occurred than not to have occurred.

6.20 If the student does not attend the hearing, or chooses not to attend but submits evidence, the panel should proceed to hear the case if it is satisfied that proper notice of the hearing was given to the student, and there are no grounds for believing that the student might have good and proper reasons for not attending.

Outcomes

6.21 The outcomes available at the hearing are detailed below

Minor academic misconduct	1. Formal written warning on database and file, and direction to written guidance by the Module Leader and note to student record database and file. The Awarding Body may be informed of the formal warning.
Major academic misconduct	2. Zero marks for the module with opportunity to be reassessed recommended, but eligibility within the assessment regulations to be determined by the Course Assessment Board and Written warning and direction to written guidance by Module Leader and note to student record database and file
Gross academic misconduct	3. Failure of module with no reassessment and recommendation that the failed module should impact on any progression or award entitlement with opportunity to restudy only if eligible within the assessment regulations, as determined by the Course Assessment Board
	4. Failure of module with no reassessment and recommendation to the Course Assessment Board that the failed module should impact on any progression or award entitlement, with no opportunity to restudy that or alternative module and Record on student record database and file
	5. Failure of all modules studied in the academic session with no opportunity for reassessment and a recommendation to the Assessment Board that either: a) an opportunity to restudy in the following academic session is permissible or b) the candidate is withdrawn from the programme with no opportunity to re-enrol until at least one year has elapsed or c) the candidate is withdrawn from the programme permanently and Record on student record database and file
	The minimum penalty for cheating in time-constrained assessments or being found in possession of unauthorised items/materials during an examination is the failure of all modules taken in the academic year, withdrawal from the course and exclusion from studies for a minimum period of one year, after which restudy of failed modules may be permitted.

Notification of Outcome

6.22 The outcome of a Hearing will be notified in writing to the student within 5 working days of the hearing. The decision of the panel will be implemented with immediate effect,

Record of offences

6.23 A record of admitted or found academic misconduct offences will remain on the student's file for the duration of their study.

6.24 All investigations will adhere to the following principles:

- **Confidentiality** – by their very nature investigations usually necessitate access to information that is confidential to a Centre or individuals. All material collected as part of an investigation must be kept secure.
- **Impartiality** - investigations will be undertaken by a nominated investigating officer and assessed against the specific facts/evidence of the case in arriving at a decision about intention and culpability.
- **Rights of individuals** – where an individual is alleged of academic misconduct they should be informed of the allegation made against them (preferably in writing) and the evidence that supports the allegation. They should be provided with the opportunity to consider their response to the allegation and submit a written statement or seek advice, if they wish to. They will have five working days in advance of the hearing to provide a written statement. They should also be informed of what the possible consequences could be if the academic misconduct is proven and of the possibility that other parties may be informed e.g. the regulators, the funding agency and professional bodies. The appeals process should also be communicated to them.
- **Candidate Interview** - students may request that they are accompanied by a friend or colleague. Retention and storage of evidence and records – all relevant documents and evidence should be retained in line with awarding organisations policy and procedures.
- **Decisions and action plans** – all conclusions should be based on evidence. A course of proposed action should be identified, agreed between the College and awarding organisations.
- **Proportionality** – any decision on the outcome must reflect the weight of evidence and the nature of the case – the student does not have to admit academic misconduct.
- **Sanctions** – any sanctions applied should be proportionate to the extent of maladministration/academic misconduct identified (and evidenced) during the investigation.

7. Appeals

7.1 Students have the right to appeal against the decision and/or any penalty imposed as a result of an academic misconduct investigation directly to the HE Academic Quality Manager, following the Appeals Policy and Procedure. Appeals should be made within

fourteen days of the date they were notified of the decision detailing the fact that they are appealing and their grounds for doing so. Appeals will usually be dealt with within 10 days.