

STUDENT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY

2025-26

1. POLICY PURPOSE

1.1 This Policy is designed to set out the principles and processes to be followed when students are alleged or known to have engaged in academic misconduct. The University is committed to maintaining high standards of academic integrity and ensuring that all students are assessed fairly. Academic misconduct reflects on the individual as well as the University, the subject area and professional community students are part of. It also has the potential to cause distress, discomfort and a sense of injustice in students and others who demonstrate integrity in their approach to learning and assessment. This Policy must be read alongside the Student Casework Shared Principles and Requirements Policy.

1.2 Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, collusion, cheating, unauthorised use of AI and fabrication of data. The University will take appropriate action to address any instances of academic misconduct.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 In practice, engaging in academic misconduct will be seen as an attempt to gain unfair advantage and is classed as engaging in conduct which falls below the expected standard at the University.

2.2 In most cases academic staff will identify academic misconduct, but if a student sees or hears of another student engaging in academic misconduct, or becomes aware of concerns around the integrity of another student's work, as a minimum they should take advice from a personal academic tutor, module tutor or the Student Casework Team. The 'conduct' (which is another word for behaviour) may or may not be serious, but consideration needs to be given as to whether the potential conduct requires a discussion with the student(s) who have behaved in a way to raise concerns, and whether it needs to be investigated in more detail.

3. SCOPE

3.1 This Policy applies to all students studying on and off the University's UK campuses, and on taught foundation, undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, research degrees, professional doctorates, short courses, apprenticeships, continuing professional development courses and, where applicable, former students of the University. The Policy will be reviewed no later than academic year 2027-2028, and as required ahead of this date.

3.2 This Policy applies to the preparation and presentation of all assessed work, including but not limited to written and oral examinations, including those undertaken electronically and remotely, and other time-constrained assessments, coursework, essays or assignments, projects, dissertations, practical work, placement or field trip reports and the production of creative work.

3.3 Modifications to the application and interpretation of the Policy may be made where the operation of flexible (for example distance, TNE or other partner based programmes) have implications for the practicability of operating the standard arrangements. Any required modifications must gain advance, written approval from the Academic Registrar or their nominated deputy, and assurance would be given that fairness to those subject to the Policy is maintained.

4. RECOGNISED DEFINITIONS

Academic misconduct is defined as any attempt by a student to gain unfair advantage in any piece of assessment. 'Academic Integrity' is at the opposite end of a spectrum of behaviours which amount to academic misconduct, as the positive values and honesty displayed by students in engaging in their studies and producing assessed work. A non-exhaustive list of types of academic misconduct is as follows:

- a. **Poor Academic Practice** is defined as a student's unfamiliarity with how to prepare and present academic work – this may arise when a student submits for assessment without acknowledgement of the source or ideas within that work, or acknowledgment of the attribution of levels of collaboration with other students.
- b. **Academic misconduct** is defined as any attempt by a student to gain an unfair advantage in any piece of assessment. An extensive, but not exhaustive list is outlined below of examples; this may include:
 - i. Copying the work of another person without acknowledging the published source through the appropriate form of citation; - the summarising of another person's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without acknowledgement;
 - ii. The use of ideas or intellectual data of another person without acknowledgement of the source, or the submission or presentation of work as if it were the student's own, which are substantially the ideas or intellectual data of another person; the submission of coursework making significant use of unattributed digital images such as graphs, tables, photographs, etc. taken from books/articles, the internet or from the work of another person.
- c. **Plagiarism** may be defined as the representation of another person's work, without acknowledgement of the source, as the student's own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Copying the work of another person without acknowledging the published source through the appropriate form of citation; - the summarising of another person's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without acknowledgement;
 - ii. The use of ideas or intellectual data of another person without acknowledgement of the source, or the submission or presentation of work as if it were the student's own, which are substantially the ideas or intellectual data of another person; the submission of coursework making significant use of unattributed digital images such as graphs, tables, photographs, etc. taken from books/articles, the internet or from the work of another person.
- d. **Self-plagiarism** – submitting the same work that a student has already submitted and gained credit for in another assessment in a different module or for a different programme when this is not explicitly permitted within a module guide or programme handbook.
- e. **Deliberate Attempt to Avoid Detection by Originality Software** - Submitting pictures of text, or hidden text, within an assignment to hide plagiarism or collusion, artificially increase or decrease the word count, or any other attempt to bypass originality detection.
- f. **Collusion** - where two or more students collaborate to produce a piece of work which is then submitted as though it were an individual student's own work; collusion does not apply to assessment components which specify group submissions. If a student knowingly makes work available to another student, this is minor collusion (see section l below). If a student uses the work of another student this is serious collusion (see section m below).

- g. **Falsifying data, evidence or experimental results** (either qualitative or quantitative), through invention or amendment, which is then presented by the student as if it had been legitimately gathered in line with the norms of the discipline concerned; or a failure to provide raw data used for research work when requested to.
- h. **Ethics approval** -conducting research and data collection without prior ethical approval, where it is explicitly required.
- i. **Confidentiality** - Breaching patient, pupil, client or participant confidentiality.
- j. **Commissioning** – involves requesting another person or electronic assistant to complete an assessment which is then submitted as the student’s own work; Commissioning or requesting an artificial intelligence/machine learning system (e.g. Chat-GPT) rather than a person to produce work which then you submit in full or in part as your own is considered to be equivalent. The work commissioned from another person can be defined as either paid or unpaid and is classified under commissioning whether the work is submitted as the student’s own or not.
- k. **Unauthorised use of AI** to write or substantially contribute to the creation of an assignment, in contravention of the assessment brief where the student then submits this as their own original piece of work.
- l. **Posting** an assessment brief on a commissioning website.
- m. **Theft of work**– submitting another student’s work as the student’s own, either in whole or in part, without that student’s permission.
- n. **Making your own work available to another student** for them to submit as their own work.
- o. **Copying another student’s assignment** either in whole or in part even where the other student has given permission
- p. **Bribery and blackmail** - paying or offering inducements or coercing another person, in order to obtain higher marks or another form of advantage such as the advance viewing of examination questions.
- q. **False declarations** – falsification of documents including fraudulent extenuating circumstances claims, falsifying evidence in support of extenuating circumstances claims or signatures on documents such as time sheets or practice assessment documents to gain academic advantage.
- r. **Additional material in examinations** - taking into any examination - on campus or online - any unauthorised notes or other unauthorised material, including electronic devices capable of storing and retrieving data.
- s. **Unauthorised devices** - the use of an unauthorised dictionary or electronic device and/or the use of unauthorised programmes on electronic devices, including algorithms on calculators or watches that have been programmed prior to the assessment.
- t. **Communicating** or attempting to communicate in any way (oral, written, electronic, nonverbal) with another person during an examination or test except where the examination rubric permits this e.g. group assessments.
- u. **Copying** or attempting to copy from another student sitting the same examination or test.

- v. **Impersonation** - being party to impersonation where another person sits an examination or test in the place of the actual student or a student is knowingly impersonated by another.
- w. **Leaving the examination or test venue** to refer to concealed notes or other unauthorised material or purporting to take the exam other than in the designated exam space or contrary to any other requirement of the Assessment Policy and related Academic Regulations.
- x. **Removal of items** - taking rough notes, stationery, scripts or examination or test papers, which indicate that they are not to be removed, away from the examination or test venue.
- y. **Disruptive behaviour** – behaving in a manner which would cause disruption to others in a shared examination setting.
- z. **Acting** so as to gain an unfair academic advantage by any means other than those set out above.

5. PRINCIPLES

5.1 The ‘burden of proof’ rests upon the University that academic misconduct has taken place, and the ‘standard of proof’ is the ‘balance of probabilities’ whereby an evidence-based judgment is made as to whether the misconduct is more likely to have taken place than not.

5.2 The University will ensure that all allegations of academic misconduct are investigated thoroughly, fairly, and as promptly as is feasible.

5.3 In the interests of ‘natural justice’, students will be informed of the allegations against them and will be given the opportunity to respond.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Academic staff are responsible for reporting allegations of academic misconduct, and designated staff for its investigation.

6.2 Students are responsible for maintaining high standards of academic integrity and adhering to this Policy.

7. MINOR AND SERIOUS ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT CRITERIA

Poor Academic Practice – Code- Minor (M0)

7.1 Markers, Invigilators, and standard External Examiners are responsible for identifying suspected cases of poor academic practice or misconduct, and reporting them to the relevant Module Leader(s).

7.2 For TNE and UK collaborative partner students, off-campus Markers must inform the Sunderland-based Module Leader of suspected cases, conduct interviews if needed, and submit completed paperwork

7.3 The Module Leader will assess the severity of the suspected misconduct and initiate the relevant procedure.

7.4 Poor academic practice applies when plagiarism or collusion is limited, particularly at early stages of study. It is identified when a student has referenced material but not indicated verbatim quotes.

Academic Misconduct

7.5 To determine the severity of the alleged academic misconduct please see below:

Plagiarism Minor (M1)

- i. Small amount of work reproduced without appropriate acknowledgement.
- ii. Unlikely intention to deceive.
- iii. No previous formal offence.
- iv. First semester/stage of the programme.
- v. Study levels 3 and 4

Plagiarism Serious (S2)

- i. Significant amount of work reproduced without appropriate acknowledgement.
- ii. Likely or proven intention to deceive.
- iii. Previous formal offence.
- iv. Later stages of the programme.
- v. Normally study level 5 and above

Other forms of Minor Academic Misconduct:

Collusion (M2) - Collaborative work is apparent in a few areas, but possibly due to lack of student's/students' awareness/making work available to others without considering the risk of collusion.

Falsification of Data (M3) - Substantial part of the data is original to the student.

Self-Plagiarism (M4) - A small amount of work already submitted as part of a previous credited assessment is being passed off as new work for another assessment.

All Examinations and In-Class Assessments (M5) -

- i. Communicating with someone other than the invigilator during an examination or in-class assessment on unrelated matters.
- ii. Unauthorised material taken into the exam is not relevant or the student can prove it is unintentionally used.

Other forms of Serious Academic Misconduct:

Collusion (S2) - Collaborative work reflects significant similarities, and is probably due to a deliberate attempt to share / use another student's work even if the student consents to this.

Falsification of Data (S3) - A significant amount of data is found to be fabricated.

Ethical Practice (S3) - Conducting research and data collection without prior ethical approval, where it is explicitly required. May include a breach of patient, participant, subject or client confidentiality.

Self-Plagiarism (S4) - A significant amount of work already submitted as part of a previous credited assessment is passed off as new work for another assessment.

Commissioning / Contract Cheating (S5) - Work commissioned from another person and submitted as the student's own, whether or not payment is made or offered/requested.

Theft of work (S6) - Someone else's work is taken without permission and passed off as the student's own.

False Declarations (S7) - False information or documentation is knowingly presented to the University in order to seek gain and academic advantage, for example in relation to Time sheet or Practice Assessment Documents (PADS) Extenuating Circumstances and Academic Appeals.

Bribery and Blackmail (S8) - Academic advantage is sought through inducement or threats to others.

All Examinations and In-Class Assessments (S9) –

- i. Communication during examination or in-class assessment in order to seek or gain academic advantage.
- ii. Possession and/or use of unauthorised notes or other material (including in electronic format on a calculator or watch) in order to seek academic advantage, whether they are used or not.
- iii. Attempting to copy from another student in the examination or in class assessment.
- iv. Misuse of examination or in-class assessment briefs, for example gaining prior knowledge of contents of unseen paper.
- v. Allowing another person to take the examination or in-class assessment on the student's behalf.
- vi. Taking material away from examination or test when instructed not to.

Unauthorised Use of AI (S10) - Submission of work created wholly, substantially and/or partially using AI, in contravention of the assessment brief where the student then claims this to be their own original piece of work.

Any other intentional attempt to gain an unfair academic advantage (S11) - Being party to any other arrangement that would constitute a breach of these procedures to gain an unfair academic advantage.

8. PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES FOR MINOR CASES

8.1 The Module Leader should notify the student and arrange an interview within two weeks of initial marking, giving at least three working days' notice.

8.2 The student must be informed of the suspected misconduct, the offence code, and its description to prepare for the interview.

8.3 If a face-to-face meeting is not feasible, alternative online means such as Teams/Zoom/Skype, telephone, or email correspondence would only be offered in exceptional circumstances when all other avenues have been exhausted.

8.4 The student should have the opportunity to have a support accompany them who should be a member of university community (e.g. another student, a staff member or a Student Union advisor) who has no conflict of interest relating to their current case.

8.5 If a student fails to attend two interviews without attempting to reschedule, the Module Leader will impose an offence code, (see section 7) and this will be communicated in writing to the student.

8.6 The student interview should be documented, and the Module Leader will decide whether to:

- a. Dismiss the case, for instance due to lack of evidence
- b. Apply a minor offence outcome
- c. Escalate the case to serious if warranted

8.7 If the student does not agree with the offence code and/or outcome the Module Leader offers; the student can request their case to be considered at a Desk Based Panel. They will have the opportunity to provide a written statement and/or previous unconsidered supporting evidence, but the student will not be invited to attend.

8.8 If a minor case is dismissed by the Module Leader, no further action is required and no note will be added to a student record.

8.9 Where following the meeting as outlined above, the following outcomes are available and are applied at the discretion of the Module Leader. The outcomes can consist of more than one outcome.

Poor Academic Practice and Minor Misconduct Outcomes

P0 - No punitive outcome – case dismissed

P1 - Academic Counselling

P2 - Referral to Library Study Skills and / or Academic Misconduct Awareness Course

P3 - A request to rewrite the work, or section of work, taking into account the feedback on the poor academic practice. The repeated work will be capped at the pass mark for the assignment.

Minor Misconduct

P4 - A marks deduction

9. SERIOUS CASES

9.1 The following procedures apply to all cases categorised as S1 to S11 serious offences in Section 7 of this Policy.

9.2 An allegation form must be submitted with all supporting evidence to the Student Casework Team which clearly states the allegation(s) of academic misconduct for a serious case process to begin.

9.3 Upon receipt of the allegation form, the Student Casework Team will assign an Independent Reviewer who will invite the student to a meeting to investigate the allegation of academic misconduct. The invitation should be sent within 10 working days of the case being assigned to the Reviewer.

9.4 The Independent Reviewer will meet with the student and document the meeting, including the student's response to the allegations, or the failure to attend if applicable.

9.5 The student should have the opportunity to have a support accompany them who should be a member of university community (e.g. another student, a staff member or a Student Union advisor) who has no conflict of interest relating to their current case

9.6 At the conclusion of the meeting, if there is a case to answer, the Independent Reviewer will confirm the offence code with the student and impose an outcome (see below). The Independent Reviewer will document the rationale for their decision. The outcome will be communicated in writing to the student within 5 working days of the meeting.

9.7 Should a student fail to attend the initial meeting, a further meeting will be arranged. Should the student fail to attend the further meeting then the Independent Reviewer will be able to impose an outcome. The outcome will be communicated to the student in writing within 5 working days.

9.8 The student will then have 5 working days to challenge in writing the offence code and outcome imposed by the Independent Reviewer. The student must provide a basis and evidence for such disagreement. The student must send this to the Student Casework Team. In such cases, the matter will then be escalated to a Desk-Based Panel. See Section 10. The student will then have the opportunity to submit a written statement and/or supporting evidence for consideration by the Desk-Based Panel. 5 working days in advance of the Desk-Based Panel or by the deadline issued by the Student Casework Team. The Panel members will reserve the right to make a judgement as to whether evidence is accepted if received after the 5 working days cut-off period.

9.9 The Independent Reviewer will also be able to send cases to a Desk-Based Panel where the allegations are disputed by the student(s), or where any evidence submitted by the student require further review or scrutiny.

9.10 Where following the meeting as outlined above, the following outcomes are available and are applied at the discretion of the Independent Reviewer.

Serious Misconduct Outcomes

P0 - No punitive outcome – case dismissed

P5 - Failure in the element of assessment with reassessment right if eligible. Component of assessment capped at 40 or appropriate pass mark for the module.

P6 - Failure in the element of assessment with reassessment right if eligible. Overall module mark capped at 40.

P7 - Failure in the module (all assessment elements) with assessment right if eligible. Overall module mark capped at 40.

10. DESK-BASED PANELS

10.1 The Desk-Based Panel will comprise of two academic staff members who will review cases in which the student has rejected a proposed offence code and outcome.

10.2 Panel members will evaluate the documentation provided by the Module Leader, additional information gathered by the Independent Reviewer, and any statements submitted by the student. The student will not be invited to attend, but will have the opportunity to submit additional evidence and/or supporting statement 5 working days in advance of the Desk-Based Panel or by the deadline issued by the Student Casework Team. The Panel members will reserve the right to make a judgement as to whether evidence is accepted if received after the 5 working days cut-off period.

10.3 Should the student fail to submit evidence and reasonable efforts have been made to contact the student in advance of the Desk-based Panel to request their documentation, then the Panel may proceed.

10.4 If the two Desk-Based Panel members are unable to reach a consensus, a third Casting Vote Member will be called upon to review the documentation and reach a final decision. The decision of the Desk-Based Panel will be communicated to the student within 5 working days. The student retains the right to appeal at the faculty level within fifteen working days from the date of their outcome letter.

11. GROSS MISCONDUCT CASES

11.1 In serious cases where the Independent Reviewer regards an outcome of P8 or higher appropriate, will going forward categorised as Gross Misconduct.

11.2 The Independent Reviewer, after meeting with the student, will provide a report detailing their findings and will incorporate the student's comments or mitigation. This will be included in the evidence portfolio submitted to the full academic misconduct panel.

11.3 The student will be given 10 working days' notice of the panel date.

11.4 The student will then be invited to submit their own statement or evidence and this should be sent to the Student Casework Team 5 working days before the panel date.

11.5 The case will be heard at an Academic Misconduct Panel. The Panel comprises of the following three members independent of the investigation which has taken place, and with no association with the student, to enable them to make objective assessments based on the evidence and representations made at the Panel meeting:

- i. Three appropriately trained and experienced academic staff members independent of any involvement with the student or case to date, one of whom will act as Panel Chair *and*
- ii. One of the Presidents' Union representative who may advise and support the student attending the Panel to respond to the allegations of academic misconduct raised. See 11.4 above.

11.6 In exceptional cases where it might not be possible to secure the presence of the President of Students' Union or authorised nominee, the Academic Registrar or nominees may authorise a variation to the Panel to include a third academic staff member. This Panel will convene within 15 working day of receiving the Independent Reviewer's report. The student will be invited to attend the panel meeting and will be granted access to all relevant evidence to prepare.

11.7 The student will be invited to attend and can be accompanied by a Student Union representative or a member of the University community for support.

11.8 After the student has presented their case and left the meeting, the panel will deliberate and decide upon an outcome. The student will be informed of the Academic Misconduct Panel's decision in writing within 5 working days. The student retains the right to appeal the decision at the faculty level within 15 working days from the date of the outcome letter.

11.9 Where following the meeting as outlined above, the following outcomes are available and are applied at the discretion of the Academic Misconduct Panel.

Gross Misconduct Outcomes

P8 – Failure in the module (all assessment elements) with reassessment right if eligible. Overall module mark capped at 40. Student will drop a degree classification within final award

P9 – Failure in module and programme with appropriate exit award. Student may be readmitted to the University on a different programme

P10 - Recommendation of expulsion from the University with no exit award or right of readmittance

12. APPEALING ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT OUTCOMES

12.1 The student may appeal a penalty imposed if one or both of these grounds exist:

- i. Material Procedural Irregularity

ii. Unconsidered Extenuating Circumstances

12.2 The Appeal will follow the Academic Appeal Policy route, and should be consulted. After consideration at the appeal stage the student will be issued with a 'Completion of Procedures' letter which will confirm that the University's internal procedures have been completed, and which will enable them to submit their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator For Higher Education (OIAHE) for consideration as to its eligibility to be reviewed under its complaints scheme should they wish to do so.

13. REVIEW

13.1 This Policy will be reviewed regularly and annually where required, to ensure it remains current and fit-for-purpose. A full review of this Policy will take place no later than academic year 2027-2028.

Effective Date: 01 September 2025

Last Revised Date: 24 August 2025

Required next Review Date: July 2027

Approved by: Academic Board, 02 July

Owner: Academic Registry and Governance,
Student Casework

Scope and Audience: University students,
staff, external representatives and bodies,
including OIAHE.

Version: 7