

# SECTION 9: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

This section of the Assessment Handbook contains the following:

- 9.1 Statement on Working with Academic Integrity;
- 9.2 Statement on Academic Misconduct;
- 9.3 Procedures in relation to academic misconduct;
- 9.4 Procedures of the Senate Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct;
- 9.5 Guidance on scale of offences and penalties in respect of academic misconduct;
- 9.6 Use of Turnitin in text matching online sources.

## 9.1 STATEMENT ON WORKING WITH ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The following statement on Working with Academic Integrity, which was produced as part of the Academic Integrity Toolkit in 2013, was adopted as a University-wide statement by the University Board for Teaching and Learning on 14 June 2016.

'Academic integrity' describes the values held to be essential in university study in the UK. The five core values have been identified as:

**Accuracy** – making sure that your work is free from errors.

**Honesty** – being truthful about which ideas are your own and which are derived from others, and about the methods and results of your research.

**Fairness** – not trying to gain an advantage by unfair means: for instance, by passing off others' work as your own.

**Responsibility** – taking an active role in your own learning: for instance, by seeking out the information you need to study effectively.

**Respect** – for your fellow students, your tutors, and the work of other scholars.

(Adapted from International Centre for Academic Integrity (1999), The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity, online at <http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/assets/FVproject.pdf>, accessed 20 May 2013.)

### What does this mean for my academic writing?

You practise academic integrity in your academic writing by working with the five values in mind, and particularly by using correct and accurate referencing. This shows that you can: be accurate in transcribing details; be honest about which ideas were derived from others; act fairly by not taking credit for others' work; take responsibility by finding out what is required of you and how you should carry it out; and show respect for others by acknowledging the part they have played in building your knowledge and understanding.

### How does this differ from what I did at school/college?

You may have used a simplified referencing system at school or college, with only direct quotes given citations. At University, you need to give a citation whenever you refer to an idea that you derived from a source. This is the case whether you use a direct quote, a paraphrase, or just a mention. There are many different styles of referencing, and you will need to find out which one is used in your department and how to set out your citations and bibliographies. You will need to learn how to cite a variety of sources correctly, and get into the habit of doing this accurately and with attention to detail.

### How might this differ from what I did in my home country?

In the UK, critical analysis and building new knowledge are key aims of academic study at university. This means you will be expected to read widely to gather a range of ideas, be critical by questioning everything you read and hear, and draw your own conclusions. You then need to support these in your writing by reference to what you have read, and to acknowledge the sources with correct citations.

## 9.2 STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Cheating, which is the attempt to gain an advantage for oneself or another by deceit, and other misconduct, are breaches of discipline and are punishable by a range of sanctions. For the purposes of these regulations, coursework will be construed as including any assessed work that is undertaken in a non-invigilated environment (for example 24 hour papers, take home exams, and online tests).

a) **Cheating in assessed coursework (for example, dissertations, long essays or projects) and open book examinations includes, but is not restricted to:**

i. Plagiarism

For the purposes of these regulations, plagiarism is defined as the fraudulent representation of another's work as one's own. This applies whatever the source of the material (for example, a published source, the web, or the work of another), whether the material is copied word for word or paraphrased, and whatever the extent of the material used. Wilful and deliberate disregard for good academic practice in respect of attribution of material will be construed as plagiarism. [Please note that programme handbooks normally provide discipline-specific advice on the appropriate use and attribution of source material].

ii. Taking a copy of another student's work without their permission (whether or not this work is subsequently plagiarised)

iii. Reproduction of work assessed elsewhere

Unless otherwise stated, it is not permissible for a piece of work submitted for assessment to include substantial sections which are drawn from another piece of work submitted for a qualification, whether of this University or another awarding body. In the case of assessments

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where the incorporation of work from another assessment is permitted, the relevant School will inform students accordingly. Any material in an assignment which has been drawn from another piece of work submitted for a qualification should be clearly indicated with a reference to the assessment and qualification for which the material was previously submitted.

- iv. Falsifying signatures, data, evidence, or experimental results.
- v. Collusion: acting with another student with the intention to deceive. This extends to the act of covering up or making untrue or misleading statements on behalf of another student regarding the act or commission of an act of academic misconduct.
- vi. Third-party proof-reading: use of a third party (e.g. friend/family member/other student/professional or pair proof-reading or editorial service) to systematically identify and/or correct mistakes or substantially edit the expression and/or content of your assessment (except, in the case of Higher Degree by Research students, where third-party proof-reading is undertaken during the publication process for part of the thesis).
- vii. Contracting to cheat: commissioning a third party (e.g: essay mill/ghost-writer/dissertation writing company/family member/friend/another student) to produce an assessment which is then submitted. Please note that payment of any kind need not have been requested or made.
- viii. Acting as an intermediary for another student to commission a third party as above. Acting as an intermediary may cover acting as a "middle person" to aid or facilitate another student to contract to cheat. It could also extend to recommending or signposting another student to a company or website knowing that the student intended to contract to cheat. This is a disciplinary offence which is actionable under the University's Disciplinary Policy as a breach of the Regulations for Student Conduct: [www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/-/media/essentials/files/the-important-stuff/discipline-and-suspension/student-disciplinary-procedure-010921.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/-/media/essentials/files/the-important-stuff/discipline-and-suspension/student-disciplinary-procedure-010921.pdf)

#### **b) Cheating and other academic misconduct in written examinations (including in-class tests and examinations administered by a School/Department) include, but are not restricted to:**

- i. Taking into the examination hall, or possessing while in the examination hall, any books, memoranda, notes or other similar material (including material held electronically) except that students are permitted to deposit such material in an area designated by the invigilator prior to the start of the examination. Material which has been supplied by the invigilator or authorised by the Examiners is exempt from this proscription.\*
- ii. Taking into the examination hall or possessing while in the examination hall any device which permits communication with others or receipt of communication from others or receipt of information;\* Mobile phones, Smart watches, headphones, ear pieces and any other related technology for example.
- iii. Copying from, consulting or otherwise making use of another candidate's script; or attempting to copy from, consult or otherwise make use of another candidate's script;
- iv. Improperly aiding or attempting to aid another candidate, or improperly obtaining or attempting to obtain aid from any person;

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- v. Consulting or attempting to consult, any books, memoranda, notes or any other similar material (including material held electronically) while present in the examination hall during the period of the examination;\*
- vi. Impersonating or attempting to impersonate another candidate or being knowingly impersonated.

\* Please note: For the purposes of these regulations, 'examination hall' includes the examination room, the toilets and any other areas to which candidates have access during the examination.

**c) Other academic misconduct in written examinations**

- i. Candidates are not allowed under any circumstances to talk to each other or to behave in a manner likely to disturb or distract other candidates during an examination.
- ii. Candidates are not permitted to smoke in the exam room. This includes the use of e-cigarettes. Candidates are not permitted to eat in the exam room and are permitted to drink still water only, except where a specific alternative arrangement has been agreed in respect of eating and/or drinking in the exam room, which would normally be on the grounds of health or wellbeing.
- iii. Candidates are not permitted to have a pencil case or other container in the vicinity of their examination desk, unless the pencil case or container is transparent.
- iv. It is forbidden to remove an examination script or a part of an examination script from the examination room.
- v. Candidates are not allowed to leave the examination before it has finished without the permission of the invigilator or to leave the examination room temporarily for any purpose without the permission of the invigilator.
- vi. Invigilators are authorised to instruct candidates who are talking or behaving in a disruptive manner to leave the room. Invigilators will report candidates whose conduct appears to constitute cheating.
- vii. It is an offence to disregard a legitimate instruction given by an invigilator. Candidates failing to comply with such instructions will be liable to disciplinary action.

**d) Other academic misconduct**

- i. It is an offence of academic misconduct to submit false or misleading evidence in support of an extenuating circumstances form. This is a disciplinary offence which is also actionable under the University's Disciplinary Policy as a breach of the Regulations for Student Conduct: [www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/-/media/essentials/files/the-important-stuff/discipline-and-suspension/student-disciplinary-procedure-010921.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/-/media/essentials/files/the-important-stuff/discipline-and-suspension/student-disciplinary-procedure-010921.pdf)
- ii. It is an offence to commence or continue research without the appropriate ethical clearance. A breach of the University's research and ethics policies (Code of Good Practice in Research) is the failure to comply with the University's guidelines and policies on ethical clearance for research. [www.reading.ac.uk/discover/-/media/discover/files/pdfs](http://www.reading.ac.uk/discover/-/media/discover/files/pdfs)
- iii. It is an offence of academic misconduct not to disclose information, when asked, in respect of prior knowledge, competence or experience which is relevant to a module for which the student has applied or registered.

e) Penalties

It must be emphasised that the most serious view is taken within the University of cheating and other academic misconduct, whether in written examinations, in-class tests, practical assessments (laboratory work or placements for example) or coursework. Any such case will be treated as a disciplinary matter and will be referred to the School Director of Teaching and Learning (in respect of students registered on taught programmes) or the School Director of Postgraduate Research (in respect of students registered on research programmes) who may impose a penalty or refer the matter to the Senate Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct (SCAM) which has the power to impose more severe penalties including expulsion from the University.

## 9.3 PROCEDURES IN RELATION TO ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT<sup>1</sup>

- 9.3.1 The University is committed to conducting a fair process when considering issues of academic misconduct. When it is alleged that a student has committed academic misconduct, the student will be referred to this procedure. As these are not criminal matters legal representation is not routinely required or usually permitted. However, where a student has received legal support during the course of the process the University retains the right to request guidance from its legal team. In complex cases where the outcome for the student, if found to have committed academic misconduct, could have far reaching implications it may be possible for the student to have legal representation during the Committee hearing. Where this is the case, permission must be sought in advance from the Chair and the University retains the right to have a member of its legal team in attendance.
- 9.3.2 This procedure applies to all registered students of the University as defined in the student related Ordinance. For PhD students the submission and/or examination of the thesis may be paused whilst the academic misconduct matter is being investigated. The University reserves the right to investigate allegations of academic misconduct brought to the attention of the University after a student has graduated. Any investigation in which academic misconduct has been proven could result in the degree already awarded being withdrawn or the classification being reduced as per the appropriate penalty in the indicative scale.

### 9.3.4 Principles

**Advice** - Students are encouraged to seek independent advice from the Advice Service in Reading University Students' Union [www.rusu.co.uk/advice](http://www.rusu.co.uk/advice).

**Diversity and Inclusion** - The University is committed to fair, equal and non-discriminatory treatment for all and this principle is set out in its Charter of Incorporation. Staff who consider cases of academic misconduct will be appropriately trained, including on issues relating to Diversity and Inclusion.

**Confidentiality** - Appropriate levels of confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process. Students involved in this process will also be required to maintain confidentiality.

**Timeliness** - The University will investigate allegations without undue delay.

**Reporting** - Academic Misconduct cases will be recorded, anonymised as appropriate, and reported annually to the University Board of Teaching and Learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: In this context, references to 'written examination' should be taken to include in-class tests (for summative assessment) administered locally by Schools/Departments

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**Reasonable adjustments** - The University will make reasonable adjustments to this procedure where appropriate.

**Burden of Proof** – The burden of proof required to satisfy a case of academic misconduct under these procedures is that of 'on the balance of probability'.

### School Director of Teaching and Learning

- 9.3.5 The relevant School Director of Teaching and Learning is the School Director of Teaching and Learning of the School which 'owns' the module in which academic misconduct is alleged. Where an SDTL becomes aware that a student may have acted as an intermediary to another student to contract to cheat, then this should be investigated and referred to under the University's Disciplinary Policy as per 9.2(a)(v).
- 9.3.6 References to the School Director of Teaching and Learning should be understood to refer, except where otherwise specified, to the School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies in cases where the allegation relates to a student registered on a postgraduate research programme.
- 9.3.7 For the Henley Business School only, the Directors of Studies will investigate all allegations of academic misconduct and will propose penalties in line with the powers of the SDTLs set out in this guidance. However all decisions will be ratified by the Henley SDTL. All other duties in this guidance allocated to SDTL will remain with the Henley SDTL.
- 9.3.8 References to the School Director of Teaching and Learning should be understood to refer, except where otherwise specified, to the Academic Director for Teaching and Learning (ADTL) in cases where the allegation relates to a student registered at a branch campus. The ADTL will liaise with the UK SDTL to ensure penalties are consistent across campuses.
- 9.3.9 Where the School responsible for the module is not the School responsible for the student's programme, the School Director of Teaching and Learning responsible for the module should, at an early stage, consult with the School Director of Teaching and Learning responsible for the student's programme, and relevant documentation should be copied to the School Director of Teaching and Learning responsible for the student's programme.

### Identifying allegations of academic misconduct in coursework

- 9.3.10 The marker of a student's work has a responsibility to be vigilant for instances of academic misconduct in coursework. This includes but is not restricted to:
- i. Plagiarism (this also includes the inappropriate use of essay writing services);
  - ii. Taking a copy of another student's work without their permission (whether or not this work is subsequently plagiarised);
  - iii. Reproduction of work assessed elsewhere;
  - iv. Falsifying data, evidence, or experimental results;
  - v. Collusion: acting with another student with the intention to deceive;
  - vi. Contracting to cheat; as previously described in 9.2(a);
- 9.3.11 For allegations of plagiarism, where a marker considers work to be excessively derivative and poorly referenced but not to be plagiarism (within the terms of the University's definition) the work should be treated as an instance of poor academic practice and **not** academic misconduct. It is not subject to disciplinary procedures. The student should be given an appropriately low mark, appropriate advice, and a warning in respect of future academic conduct. A note that such advice and a warning have been given should be entered on the student's RISIS record by the School Director of Teaching and Learning. Records of advice and warnings will be recorded appropriately.

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- 9.3.12 Where a student persists in reproducing the work of another without adequate acknowledgement, the record that the student had been advised about poor academic practice provides important evidence for establishing that the student is showing wilful disregard for good academic practice which is construed as plagiarism.
- 9.3.13 Where a marker believes plagiarism to have been committed (i.e. that a student has fraudulently represented the work of another as their own), they are required to report the case to the School Director of Teaching and Learning who 'owns' the module who shall investigate the allegation.
- 9.3.14 Where the marker believes that the work produced is not the work of the student but a third-party (i.e. that a student has contracted to cheat), they are required to report the case to the School Director of Teaching and Learning who 'owns' the module who shall investigate the allegation. It may be possible that allegations of both 9.3.13 and 14 may be considered concurrently due to the specific concerns raised by a particular case, but where only one may ultimately be deemed to have occurred depending upon the relevance and strength of the evidence presented.
- 9.3.15 In the case of a research student, the School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies of the School where the student's primary supervisor is based shall investigate the allegation.

### **Identifying allegations of academic misconduct in examinations**

- 9.3.16 If an Invigilator believes that a student is cheating in a written examination, they are required to report the case immediately to the Chief Invigilator. If a marker believes that a student has been cheating in a written examination, they are required to report the case immediately to the School Director of Teaching and Learning, who should contact the University Examinations and Graduation Office.  
NB: The University reserves the right to confiscate from examination candidates mobile phones, Smart watches, headphones, ear pieces and any other related technology and other items that are not permitted within the examination centre. Confiscated items may be retained until the procedures have been completed.
- 9.3.17 The Chief Invigilator is required to investigate any reported suspicion of cheating and then at their discretion:-
- i. to determine that there may be sufficient grounds for believing an offence to have been committed and that no further action be taken; OR
  - ii. to determine that there may be sufficient grounds for believing an offence to have been committed, and to submit a report to the Head of Examinations and Graduation, who will refer the case to the School Director of Teaching and Learning responsible for the module.
- 9.3.18 The Chief Invigilator and/or the Head of Examinations and Graduation, in investigating a case of suspected cheating, should normally interview the student about whom the suspicion has been raised.
- 9.3.19 Where a Chief Invigilator reports a case for referral to the School Director of Teaching and Learning, the School Director of Teaching and Learning shall investigate the allegation.

## **Procedures at School level**

### **Investigating allegations of academic misconduct**

- 9.3.20 To investigate the allegation, the School Director of Teaching and Learning should normally interview the student against whom the allegation of academic misconduct has been made.
- 9.3.21 Where the allegation relates to contracting to cheat, the School Director of Teaching and Learning may undertake a number of actions as part of the investigation as relevant to the specifics of each allegation. The outcomes of these investigations should be made available to SCAM if the case is escalated:

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- 9.3.21.1 Undertake a review of the students' overall performance to date, particularly focussing on unexpected grade shifts especially in relation to low attendance and engagement for the module
- 9.3.21.2 Undertake a review of the assessment against previously submitted assessments in order to identify samples of the student's normal writing style
- 9.3.21.3 Undertake a review of the document submitted to establish whether the meta-data captured within the document may identify different authorship
- 9.3.21.4 Consider and/or investigate any information or communications received from a third party regarding the allegation. This may be information from a person who acted as the intermediary, a third party who has provided an assessment or someone who is employed by a third party (for example a "writer" employed by an essay writing company) who has been contracted with to create an assessment
- 9.3.21.5 Undertake a viva, separate from any interview with the student regarding authorship, in order to gather evidence for submission to SCAM should the case be escalated. This is an academic process to assess the students understanding of the work that they have submitted;
  - 9.3.21.5.1 The viva should be chaired by someone independent from the investigation to ensure impartiality but the panel must include someone (this would normally be the SDTL or Module Convenor) who is appropriately experienced and trained and has topic specific knowledge and expertise;
  - 9.3.21.5.2 If a viva is to be undertaken the student would receive reasonable notice of the date which would be no less than 10 working days;
  - 9.3.21.5.3 Notes or a summary of the viva would be recorded which would be made available to SCAM;
  - 9.3.21.5.4 The viva would not affect the mark for the work except as a consequence of the finding of the academic misconduct allegation further to SCAM.
- 9.3.22 A student has the right to be accompanied to any meeting/viva by a 'friend'. A 'friend' for this purpose, is defined as: an adviser from Reading University Students' Union Advice Service team, a current member of staff of the University of Reading, a currently registered student of the University of Reading, or a RUSU Student Officer. A person who does not fall within these categories will not be able to act as a 'friend' unless otherwise agreed by the SDTL or the Chair. Disabled Students may also be accompanied by a Support Worker in addition to a 'friend', as appropriate to their needs.
- 9.3.23 The School Director of Teaching and Learning shall consider the case and determine at their discretion, and on the balance of probabilities:
  - a) that no case has been established and that no further disciplinary action be taken;

*[Note on poor academic practice: In cases of poor academic practice, the School Director of Teaching and Learning should provide the relevant advice and appropriately signpost the student to the Study Advice Team to ensure that the student is aware of good academic practice. In such cases, the work may be marked as if the offending passages had been omitted and a corresponding mark awarded. Where the student has been given a warning in respect of future conduct, a record should be held on the student's RISIS record.]*

OR

- b) that a case of academic misconduct has been established.

The School Director of Teaching and Learning shall issue a full report on the allegation, including the Minutes of the interview with the student, and an outcome letter which provides the right to appeal. The student's RISIS record should also be updated to reflect the outcome.



### Penalties for offences of academic misconduct

9.3.24 If a case of academic misconduct has been established and assessment is purely formative (i.e. it does not contribute to classification or progression), the student should be warned that the practice is unacceptable, and a record be kept of this warning on RISIS.

9.3.25 If a case of academic misconduct has been established and the work concerned does contribute to classification or progression, the School Director of Teaching and Learning will either:

- a) impose a penalty for offence of academic misconduct, in accordance with the *Guidance on scale of offences and penalties in respect of academic misconduct*;

The School Director of Teaching and Learning has the power to impose the following penalties for academic misconduct:

- Admonish the student;
- Reduce the mark in the relevant assessment;
- Fail the relevant assessment with the normal right to resit;
- Fail the relevant assessment without the normal right to resit;
- Fail the relevant module with the normal right to resit;
- Fail the relevant module without the normal right to resit.

OR

- b) refer the case to the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct.

The School Director of Teaching and Learning shall always refer the case to the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct in the following circumstances:

- i. if the appropriate penalty, prior to taking account of any mitigating circumstances, is beyond the powers of a School Director of Teaching and Learning, set out in 9.3.21); OR
- ii. if the allegation of academic misconduct occurred in a module of special significance\*; OR
- iii. the appropriate penalty, prior to taking account of any mitigating circumstances, will result in any professional accreditation being removed; OR
- iv. if allegation of academic misconduct occurred in a module which is worth more than 40 credits of the student's programme.

\*Note: If the module is of special significance, that is, the progression rules for the programme requires the student to pass the relevant module, or would result in the student being removed from the University, the School Director of Teaching and Learning must refer the case to the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct. The School Director of Teaching and Learning has the authority to impose a penalty where the student shall fail the programme at first or second attempt directly as a result of the penalty due to the student's marks in their other modules.

The School Director of Teaching and Learning may wish to seek advice from a Teaching and Learning Dean.

9.3.26 The 'relevant assessment' is the assessment in which the student has committed academic misconduct; and the 'relevant module' is the module in which the student has committed academic misconduct.

9.3.27 In cases where a student is given a specific warning about, or is found to have committed, plagiarism and poor academic practice has been a contributory factor, the School Director of

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Teaching and Learning should, as a matter of routine, advise the student to contact the Study Advice Team for appropriate guidance.

### Records

9.3.28 For guidance on recording academic misconduct on RISIS, please see the link to the Procedures for recording on RISIS offences of academic misconduct and warnings in respect of risk of academic misconduct:

<https://www.risisweb.reading.ac.uk/si//RISISweb%20portal%20documents/Academic%20misconduct%20Feb%202010.doc>

9.3.29 The School Director of Teaching and Learning is responsible for ensuring that instances of poor academic practice, and offences of academic misconduct are appropriately recorded on RISIS. The School should maintain a cumulative record of all cases of academic misconduct, indicating the name of the student, the nature of the allegation, the finding in the case, and the action taken. Minutes should be kept of the interview between the School Director of Teaching and Learning and the student against whom an allegation has been made.

## Procedures at University level

9.3.30 Where a case has been referred to the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct, the Committee shall, without undue delay, normally hold a meeting with the student (or, where this is not possible, receive a written submission) and with the School Director of Teaching and Learning (or a designated alternate) and shall, at its discretion and on the balance of probabilities, determine:

- a) that no case has been established and that no further disciplinary action be taken. Where the student has been given a warning in respect of future conduct, a record should be held on the student's RISIS record;  
OR
- b) that a case of academic misconduct has been established.

9.3.31 The Procedures of the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct are set out in Section 9.4.

9.3.32 The Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct shall consider the allegation and has the power to impose the following penalties:

- Admonish the student;
- Reduce the mark in the relevant assessment;
- Fail the relevant assessment with the normal right to resit;
- Fail the relevant assessment without the normal right to resit;
- Fail the relevant module with the normal right to resit;
- Fail the relevant module without the normal right to resit;
- Fail any module with the right to resit;
- Fail any module without the right to resit;
- Fail any module(s) and cap the classification of the award;
- Fail a Part;
- Terminate the student's registration retaining eligibility for a lesser award;
- Terminate the student's registration without eligibility for a lesser award.

## Appeals

9.3.33 All students have the right to appeal against a penalty that has been imposed on them for academic misconduct.

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- 9.3.34 Appeals against the decision of a School Director of Teaching and Learning shall be considered by the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct. If a student wishes to appeal against the decision of a School Director of Teaching and Learning, they should submit a statement outlining their reasons for appeal to [studentappeals@reading.ac.uk](mailto:studentappeals@reading.ac.uk) **within five working days** from being informed of the penalty in writing.
- 9.3.35 Appeals against the decision of the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct, where the decision is not in respect of an appeal against the decision of a School Director of Teaching and Learning, shall be considered by the Student Appeals Committee. If a student wishes to appeal against the decision of the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct, they should submit a statement outlining their reasons for appeal to [studentappeals@reading.ac.uk](mailto:studentappeals@reading.ac.uk) **within five working days** from the date of the formal outcome letter.

# 9.4 PROCEDURES OF THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

- 9.4.1 The Senate Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct, "the Committee", has two functions:
- i. The Committee is responsible for considering cases of alleged misconduct which have been referred to the Committee, and for imposing penalties on those students found to have committed offences of academic misconduct.
  - ii. The Committee is responsible for considering appeals of penalties imposed by the School Directors of Teaching and Learning for academic misconduct. The Committee shall only consider an appeal if the student submits a statement of appeal within five working days from being informed of the penalty that has been imposed by the School Director of Teaching and Learning.

## Membership

- 9.4.2 The membership of the Committee comprises a Chair appointed by the University Executive Board, the School Directors of Teaching and Learning, and a Student Officer from RUSU. The Teaching and Learning Deans shall be alternate Chairs. The University Secretary shall nominate a Secretary.
- 9.4.3 The Committee normally delegates to a panel its powers and responsibilities for considering and determining cases of alleged misconduct. The panel shall be drawn from the membership of the Committee and shall normally comprise the Chair, a Student Officer from RUSU, which shall normally be the Education Officer, and any other two members.
- 9.4.4 A Teaching and Learning Dean shall not be Chair if they have advised the School Director of Teaching Learning on the student's case at any stage of the procedures.
- 9.4.5 The School Director of Teaching and Learning who is responsible for the module in which the student allegedly committed academic misconduct, or the student's programme, shall not be a panel member.
- 9.4.6 No act or ruling of the Committee will be invalidated by reason only of vacancy in the Committee or by reason of absence of one panel member from any meeting provided always that the Committee will not proceed to consider any case unless the Chair and two of its members are present.

## On receipt of the referral

- 9.4.7 To refer a case to the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct, the School Director of Teaching and Learning who investigated the allegation shall normally provide the following:

**For allegations of academic misconduct in coursework:**

- A referral letter setting out the grounds for referral and an overview of the enclosed documents;
- A Turnitin report, if applicable;
- A marked up copy of the assignment indicating the plagiarised passages, if applicable;
- A marked up copy of the sources that have been copied into the piece of work, if applicable;
- Minutes of the interview with the student;
- A copy of the relevant sections of the handbook with information about plagiarism;
- A copy of any warnings that were issued to the student;
- A copy of any internal emails or letters about the case;
- Any relevant emails and letters to the student.

**For allegations of contracting to cheat the following should be provided:**

- Notes or a summary from the viva, if one was undertaken;
- A copy the report relating to the review of; overall performance, assessments to identify difference in authorship and from the meta-data of the submitted document if these have been undertaken;
- A copy of any communications or screen prints regarding the allegation, proof of the commission of work, discussions regarding payment and/or anonymised information from an individual who has whistle blown.

**For allegations of academic misconduct in examinations:**

- A referral letter setting out the grounds for referral and an overview of the enclosed documents;
- A copy of any illicit material relevant to the allegation;
- A copy of the student's examination script;
- A copy of the examination script the student allegedly copied from, if applicable;
- Minutes of the interview with the student;
- A copy of any warnings that were issued to the student;
- A copy of any internal emails or letters about the case;
- Any relevant emails and letters to the student.

9.4.8 On receiving the appropriate documentation, the Secretary shall invite the student to a meeting on a specified date and time, and inform the student of the procedure to be followed. The student shall normally be given at least five working days' notice.

9.4.9 The School Director of Teaching and Learning who investigated the allegation shall be invited to the same meeting and shall act as the School's representative.

9.4.10 The student, the School Director of Teaching and Learning acting as the School's representative, and the Committee shall receive the same documents in advance of the meeting:

- When the Committee is considering an allegation at first instance, this will normally comprise of a written report provided by the School Director of Teaching and Learning and any relevant evidence set out in Section 9.4.7 of this procedure.
- When the Committee is considering an appeal of a decision of the School Director of Teaching and Learning, this will normally comprise of: an appeal statement submitted by the student and any supporting evidence, the outcome letter from the School Director of Teaching and Learning containing the penalty that has been imposed, and a copy of all evidence considered by the School Director of Teaching and Learning when they considered the allegation.

9.4.11 The student should also be informed of the following in advance of the meeting:

- a) How to access advice from the RUSU Advice Service;

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- b) The composition of the Committee (which is already contained in the University's Committee list). Where ever possible the names of the panel will be notified to the student in advance. Any possible conflicts of interest will be mitigated prior to the commencement of the hearing.
- c) The student's right to be accompanied by a 'friend' which for this purpose is defined as: an adviser from Reading University Students' Union Advice Service team, a current member of staff of the University of Reading, a currently registered student of the University of Reading, or a University of Reading Students' Union Student Officer. A person who does not fall within these categories will not be able to act as a 'friend' unless otherwise agreed by the Chair.  
The role of the 'friend' is to support the student in preparation for the hearing; accompany the student at the hearing; the 'friend' may speak on the behalf of a student, with the permission of the Chair. It is not the role of the 'friend' to present the student's case on their behalf, except in the most exceptional circumstances. Disabled Students may also be accompanied by a Support Worker in addition to a 'friend', as appropriate to their needs.
- d) If the student is not able to attend the meeting in person, they will have the opportunity to attend via telephone. Their 'friend' is still able to attend in person.
- e) If the student has any special requirements to allow them to attend and/or participate fully in the hearing they should notify the Secretary in at least two working days in advance of the meeting so that the University can make appropriate reasonable adjustments.

9.4.12 The advice of the Head of Student Wellbeing or an appropriate professional will be available in appropriate cases. Where a student does not consent to medical information being provided to the University, the investigation will proceed on the basis of the information available to the University at the time.

### During the meeting

- 9.4.13 The student, the 'friend' and the School's representative will be present throughout the Committee's hearing of evidence.
- 9.4.14 The proceedings of the Committee will not be invalidated by the failure of the student or the 'friend' to attend the hearing or by their exclusion from the meeting. The School Director of Teaching and Learning is expected to attend the meeting but proceedings will not be invalidated by the absence of the School Director of Teaching and Learning.
- 9.4.15 The Committee will deliberate in private.
- 9.4.16 The Committee has the power to adjourn a hearing for a reasonable period.
- 9.4.17 The Committee has the power to call any witnesses it wishes, whether requested by the student or the School Director of Teaching and Learning or not. A student may submit a statement to the Committee from any witnesses and the Committee will consider the weight of such a statement when determining guilt and/or the appropriate penalty.

### After the meeting

- 9.4.18 The Secretary will normally send an informal notification of the outcome by email the same or following day and the Minutes of the hearing, once agreed by the Chair, will be issued to the student within ten working days.
- 9.4.19 The Secretary will record the penalty on RISIS.
- 9.4.20 If the Committee was considering an appeal of a decision of the School Director of Teaching and Learning and the appeal is not upheld, the Secretary shall normally issue a Completion of Procedures letter. In this instance, the appeal to the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct concludes the University's internal procedures.

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- 9.4.21 If the student remains dissatisfied with the final decision of the University, they may submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided that the complaint is eligible under the OIA rules. Students who wish to do so must submit a complaint to the OIA within twelve months of the date of the University's Completion of Procedures letter
- 9.4.22 If the Committee was considering an allegation of academic misconduct at first instance, the student shall be informed of their right to appeal against the decision of the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct to the Student Appeals Committee. In this instance, the appeal to the Student Appeals Committee will conclude the University's internal procedures, and the Secretary will normally issue a Completion of Procedures Letter.
- 9.4.23 If the student remains dissatisfied with the final decision of the University, the student may submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) providing that the complaint is eligible under the OIA rules. Students who wish to do so must submit a complaint to the OIA within twelve months of the date of the University's Completion of Procedures letter
- 9.4.24 The Secretary shall maintain a cumulative record of all cases of academic misconduct considered by the Committee, and will report the outcomes to Senate.
- 9.4.25 Where the case has raised institutional learning points, the Committee will write to the relevant area of the University to notify them of the actions and/or recommendations. The timescale in which the area must have undertaken a review or implemented the actions and provided the Chair of the Committee with a formal response will be given.

## Appeals process

- 9.4.26 Appeals against decisions of the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct are to the Student Appeals Committee. Full details can be found in the [Student Appeals Committee \(SAC\) Policy](#). The Student Appeals Committee shall have the authority either to overturn or uphold the decision of the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct.
- 9.4.27 The student should notify the University Secretary by email of their request for a review and the basis for that request in writing within five working days of the date of issue of the notification of the decision of the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct.
- 9.4.28 Admissible grounds for review shall be one or more of the following:
- There has been a procedural error; or
  - New and relevant evidence is available that was not known at the time; or
  - The decision-making Committee acted unreasonably, or the impact of the sanction imposed was unreasonably disproportionate.
- 9.4.29 The Student Appeals Committee will not make a professional determination on fitness to study and, consequently, in its review it will determine only whether the grounds presented are valid and sufficient for the decision of the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct to be overturned.
- 9.4.30 Where the appeal is upheld the Student Appeals Committee shall refer the case back to the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct, notifying it of the grounds on which it believes the case should be re-considered. The Secretary of the Student Appeals Committee will notify the student, School Director of Teaching and Learning or their delegate, Teaching and Learning Dean, or, in a case relating to a student at a branch campus, the Provost (or their delegate), of the decision.
- 9.4.31 The Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct will reconvene to hear the case for a second time in the light of the decision of the Student Appeals Committee. The normal appeals process will apply with the exclusion that the basis for the appeal must not be the same substantive matter as in the first appeal.
- 9.4.32 If the Student Appeals Committee decides to uphold the decision of the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct its decision shall be final. The Secretary of the Student Appeals Committee will notify the student, School Director of Teaching and Learning or their delegate,

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Teaching and Learning Dean, or, in a case relating to a student at a branch campus, the Provost (or their delegate) of the decision. The student will be notified in writing, normally within five working days, that this decision constitutes the completion of procedure.

### Reporting

- 9.4.33 Once a year (in the summer term) a report is produced for the Senate. This report includes a breakdown of cases by type, outcomes and penalties, schools, ethnicity and nationality and gender.
- 9.4.34 Once a year (prior to the examination period) circulate to Sub-Committee on the Delivery and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (DELT), School Boards for Teaching and Learning (SBTL) and University Board of Teaching and Learning (UBTL) an anonymised report on the outcomes of the academic process at both School and University level. This would be with a view to ascertaining any institutional learning from the process.

### Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 9.4.35 It is the University's aim to deal with matters covered by this procedure sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All parties must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with a matter which is subject to this procedure, subject to the need to seek appropriate advice and guidance or to implement any decision made under it. The University will, during or at the conclusion of the procedure, inform such individuals or organisations as it considers necessary, having due regard to all the relevant circumstances.
- 9.4.36 In cases where the University holds personal data relating to individuals as a result of this procedure, the University will comply with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and all associated legislation at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that any personal data held on such individuals is:
- not excessive but relevant and limited to the purpose for which it is held;
  - held securely (and in accordance with the university policies);
  - not shared with any other third parties (unless this can be lawfully shared in accordance with GDPR); and
  - not held for longer than is necessary and in line with our retention schedules

## 9.5 GUIDANCE ON SCALE OF OFFENCES AND PENALTIES IN RESPECT OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

*[Please refer to the diagram indicating the Indicative scale of offences and penalties below.]*

### 9.5.1 Governing principle

It is a fundamental principle that the penalty for academic misconduct (prior to mitigation of a penalty in the light of medical or personal circumstances) should have greater detriment to the student than the simple exclusion of the material directly affected by the misconduct in the determination of the mark.

### 9.5.2 Scale

The diagrammatic scale of offences and penalties indicates the range of penalties which would normally apply for offences (prior to mitigation of penalties in the light of medical or personal

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circumstances). It is recognised that the severity and circumstances of offences within the same category will differ, and, in consequence, the competent body should exercise its discretion in determining an appropriate penalty which will normally be within the specified range. In exceptional circumstances, the relevant body may impose a penalty outwith the normal range for the category of offence. The relevant body shall not in any case agree a penalty which exceeds its powers to impose; in cases where the relevant body considers that an offence merits a penalty which is more severe than the relevant body has the power to impose, the relevant body should refer the case to the higher body.

The Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct may impose a penalty which is not specified in the framework, provided that such a penalty relates to a formal result for academic work such as a mark or classification awarded for academic work or a requirement that further academic work be undertaken. The Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct shall not impose as a penalty suspension from the University nor a financial penalty, although penalties imposed by the Committee (and by other relevant bodies) may entail, as a consequence, additional costs to the student and/or a period of suspension from the University.

In determining an appropriate penalty, the competent body should take account of the extent of the cheating and its impact on the assessment. Consideration should be given to the importance of the task and to the significance of the material affected by academic misconduct to the task.

Please note that the indications of extent in respect of plagiarism are not intended as precise measures of quantity but are intended to represent orders of magnitude. In determining extent, the proportion of plagiarised material within a piece of work should be taken into account.

### Gross academic misconduct

For example:

- Plagiarism which is substantial in extent. The extent of the plagiarism depends on the centrality of the material to the piece of work and the intended gain: for example, reproducing material which is substantial from a source or sources without acknowledgement; or the substantial use of ideas and arguments of a source or sources which does not appear in the references or bibliography, where the context is such that it is presented as the student's own ideas.
- Contracting to cheat.
- Falsification of data which is substantial in extent or importance, including the principal data on which the results of a postgraduate dissertation or thesis are based.
- Impersonation or being impersonated.
- Cheating in written examinations or in-class tests which is extensive or systematic.

**Penalty:** normally removal from membership of University with no eligibility for lesser award or retaining eligibility for lesser award.

**Lowest penalising body:** Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct

### Major academic misconduct

For example:

- Plagiarism which is major in extent. The extent of the plagiarism depends on the centrality of the material to the piece of work and the intended gain: for example, the substantial use of others' ideas and arguments where the source appears in the references or bibliography, although the ideas and arguments are not themselves acknowledged.
- Falsification of data which is major in either extent or importance.



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- Cheating in written examinations or in-class tests which is less extensive.

Penalty: normally

- a) Failure of Part with marks of zero in all modules, retaining any normal right of resit; or
- b) (as a possible penalty in the case of finalists) Fail relevant modules and cap classification to Pass.

Lowest penalising body: Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct

#### Significant academic misconduct

For example:

- Plagiarism which is significant in extent or importance. The extent of the plagiarism depends on the centrality of the material to the piece of work and the intended gain: for example, plagiarism that falls short of being substantial but still has a potentially significant bearing on the outcome of the assessment.
- Falsification of data which is significant in either extent or importance, including work where the data are the basis on which conclusions are derived and knowledge is claimed to be based.
- Cheating in written examinations or in-class tests which may not be extensive.

Penalty: normally

- a) Fail specified modules/assessments extending beyond those in which misconduct took place with or without normal right to resit.
- b) Fail module or assessment in which misconduct took place without normal right to resit.

Lowest penalising body: School Director of Teaching and Learning

#### Minor academic misconduct

For example:

- Plagiarism which is minor in extent. The extent of the plagiarism depends on the centrality of the material to the piece of work and the intended gain: for example, a clear example of plagiarism, although it is of little significance to the piece of work.
- Falsification of data which is minor in either extent or importance, for example data associated with demonstrating known practices. Any falsification of experimental data which are intended to or would normally be expected to generate knowledge, including those in a postgraduate or a final year undergraduate project, cannot be regarded as minor.

Penalty: normally

- Fail module in which misconduct took place with normal right to resit.
- Fail assessment in which misconduct took place with normal right to resit.
- Reduce mark of assessment in which misconduct took place.
- Admonition.

Lowest penalising body: School Director of Teaching and Learning

### 9.5.3 Second offences

### **Penalties for second offences**

Previous offences will be considered during the hearing if they are of the same nature. All previous offences or/and warnings will be considered when agreeing the appropriate penalty to impose.

In the case of a student who is found to have committed 'sequential' offences of academic misconduct where the second offence is significant or above, a student will normally be removed from membership of the University. This principle applies whether or not the sequential offences are of the same type of academic misconduct (cheating in coursework or cheating in written exams).

The convention that a student is not normally removed from the University for a second offence which is minor is deemed proportionate, and should not be construed as condoning serial minor offences. A third offence, whether minor or not, should normally result in removal from the University.

### **What count as 'sequential' offences?**

It should be noted that an offence is deemed to be 'sequential' if, at the time of committing the second offence, the student could reasonably be assumed to be aware that they were committing a second offence.

In respect of written examinations and in-class tests, there is a presumption that a student who brings notes into examinations or who copies from another student is fully aware that they are committing an offence. A student who commits offences in two examinations or in-class tests would normally be considered to have committed 'sequential' offences, whether or not they have been apprehended and interviewed in respect of the first offence.

In respect of plagiarism, there is normally a presumption that a student who commits plagiarism, having received the University's standard documentation in respect of academic misconduct and the guidance included in programme handbooks, is fully aware that they are committing academic misconduct. However, consideration should be given to whether there are factors, such as lack of experience of higher education, which lead to a failure fully to appreciate the distinction between poor practice and academic misconduct and which mean that such a presumption would be unsafe. Where such factors apply, it may not be appropriate to deem a second offence 'sequential' unless a warning has been given.

## **9.5.4 Intent**

It should be noted that the University's definition of plagiarism as academic misconduct incorporates the concepts of intent and wilful disregard for good academic practice; and that other forms of academic misconduct are based on the principle of strict liability (i.e. there is no requirement that intent be established). In the case of academic misconduct other than plagiarism, however, intent should be taken into account in determining the penalty.

## **9.5.5 Student's experience**

The level of a student (first-year undergraduate, Finalist, postgraduate, etc) is not in itself a relevant factor in determining the seriousness of the offence or the penalty to be imposed. However, the relevant body should, in appropriate circumstances, give due consideration to a student's experience of UK higher education (or equivalent). The relevant body, for example, may consider that a student's inexperience may have contributed to their failure to understand the seriousness of an offence, and, in these circumstances, may decide to mitigate the penalty. Such a consideration is likely to be more relevant in cases of plagiarism than in cases of cheating in written examinations or in-class tests. Normally, a first-year student will be less experienced than a third-year student, but it should be recognised that some first-year students may have significant experience of UK higher

education (or equivalent). Due consideration should also be given to differences in academic cultures which may mean that some overseas students (including postgraduates) may have less experience of the conventions in UK universities.

## 9.5.6 Consequences of penalties

In determining an appropriate penalty, the relevant body should impose a penalty commensurate with the offence. Due consideration should be given to the consequential implications of the penalty for the individual student: for example, in some cases failure in a module and removal of the normal right to resit might mean, due to the progression rules for the programme, that the student had irredeemably failed their programme and would eventuate in the student's removal from the University. If the relevant body believes that such an outcome would be disproportionate, it may impose a variant on the normal penalty. Equally, however, due consideration should be given to the significance of the offence in relation to the core requirements for the student's programme: an offence in a core module which is testing competences central to the award may be considered as particularly serious, and may therefore merit a more severe penalty.

## 9.5.7 Plagiarism and referencing

In considering allegations of plagiarism, the relevant body should determine whether the student has attempted to pass off another's work as their own. In this context, failure to observe normal referencing conventions or failure to include quotation marks would normally be treated as poor academic practice rather than academic misconduct provided there is a serious attempt at attribution. For example, a general attribution to unnamed 'authorities', while far from ideal, indicates that the student is not seeking to pass off the views as their own. Similarly, where a student includes in the bibliography the source for material which is discussed in an essay without specific attribution, it may be appropriate to treat such a case as poor academic practice (except in the case of postgraduate students).

## 9.5.8 Mitigating circumstances

The University does not accept a student's medical or personal circumstances as an excuse/reason for cheating. However, the bodies responsible for imposing penalties for academic misconduct are obliged to consider whether the penalty should be mitigated in the light of personal or medical circumstances.

The University has established and well publicised procedures for considering medical or personal circumstances which a student believes have impaired their performance in assessment. If students are experiencing difficult circumstances, they should discuss their problems with their Academic Tutor and submit an extenuating circumstances form in respect of assessments. In consequence, a student's medical or personal circumstances shall not constitute grounds for exonerating a student from an offence of academic misconduct, other than in the exceptional case where a student's capacity for rational judgement has been severely impaired.

Exceptionally, where a student's capacity for rational judgement has been severely impaired, the body responsible for considering the case may determine that the student has not committed academic misconduct.

In cases where a student has been found to have committed academic misconduct and was experiencing difficult medical or personal circumstances which were beyond their control and are judged to have contributed to the commission of the offence, the body responsible for considering the case is required to take due account of the circumstances in determining the penalty for the offence.

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Where a School is minded to determine that a student has not committed academic misconduct on the grounds that their rational judgment was impaired or is minded to mitigate a penalty in the light of medical or personal circumstances, the endorsement of the Teaching and Learning Dean is required for the decision to become effective. Teaching and Learning Deans are responsible for ensuring, by reference to benchmarks established by precedent, that consistency is maintained across Schools in determining impairment of rational judgment and in mitigation of penalty.

## 9.6 USE OF TURNITIN IN TEXT MATCHING ONLINE SOURCES

For guidance on the use of Turnitin in text matching online sources, please see Section 6.9 of the Assessment Handbook.

### Version control

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date	Effective from
1	AGS	Annually	UBTL	TBC	September 2018
2	AGS		UBTLSE	19 March 2019	March 2019
3	AGS	Minor spelling amendments			September 2019
4	AGS		UBTLSE	22 January 2021	Immediately

## Indicative scale of offences/penalties

This diagram is designed to be used in conjunction with the Guidance on scale of offences and penalties in respect of academic misconduct (Assessment Handbook, Section 9.5)

Competent body		Penalty	Applicable body	Offences																			
				Possessing notes in written exam	2	Possessing communication device in written exam	2	Copying or attempting to copy from another student	2	Improperly aiding (or attempt)	2	Consulting illicit material	2	Impersonating	2	Taking another's work	2	Falsification of data	2	Including work used for another assessment	2	Assisting in offences	2
SCAM	Gross	Expel without eligibility for lesser award/Withdraw award	SAC																				
SCAM	Gross	Expel retaining eligibility for lesser award/Reduce award	SAC																				
SCAM	Major	Fail Part (i.e. all modules with right to resit in some or	SAC																				

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		all)/Adjust award if required																
SCAM	Major	Fail relevant modules and cap classification to Pass)/Adjust award if required	SA C															
SDTL	Significant	Fail specified assessments without normal right to resit)/Adjust award if required	SC AM															
SDTL	Significant	Fail specified assessments with normal right to resit)/Adjust award if required	SC AM															
SDTL	Significant	Fail relevant module or assessment without right to resit)/Adjust award if required	SC AM															



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Competent body		Penalty	Appeal body	Offences									
				Gross plagiarism	2	Contracting to cheat	2	Major plagiarism	2	Significant plagiarism	2	Minor plagiarism	2
SCAM	Gross	Expel without eligibility for lesser award/Withdraw award	SAC										
SCAM	Gross	Expel retaining eligibility for lesser award/Reduce award	SAC										
SCAM	Major	Fail Part/Adjust award if required	SAC										
SCAM	Major	Fail relevant modules and cap classification/Adjust award if required	SSAC										
SDTL	Significant	Fail specified modules without normal right to resit/Adjust award if required	SCAM										
SDTL	Significant	Fail specified modules with normal right to resit/Adjust award if required	SCAM										
SDTL	Significant	Fail relevant module or assessment without right to resit/Adjust award if required	SCAM										
SDTL	Minor	Fail relevant module retaining normal right to resit/Adjust award if required	SCAM										
SDTL	Minor	Fail assessment retaining normal right to resit/Adjust award if required	SCAM										
SDTL	Minor	Reduce mark in relevant assessment/Adjust award if required	SCAM										
SDTL	Minor	Admonish student	SCAM										



