

## Procedural Information to support the Academic Misconduct Policy

**Please note these procedures are not final and will be updated and republished in November 2025. They have been made available now to support any early cases of suspected misconduct. Please contact [academicmisconduct@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:academicmisconduct@sussex.ac.uk) with queries.**

### 1. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This document provides the procedural information that underpins the University's Misconduct Policy [*hereafter 'the Policy'*]. It must be read in conjunction with the Policy.
- 1.2 It is designed to provide further information to all staff members responsible for operationalising the Policy.

### 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 The procedural information mirrors the Policy and has sections relating to definitions and levels of academic misconduct, indicative penalties, and procedures for determining a case of academic misconduct, including referral to an academic misconduct panel.
- 2.2 As per 4.1 of the University's [Policy on the Creation and Management of University Policies](#), procedural or process documents like this one outline the required way of working, and processes which must be followed. They are official documents to which staff must adhere. Guidance holds a different designation; it provides related advice or details of best practice. It will be made clear within the document where a section/clause is guidance rather than a procedure.
- 2.3 This is a University level document. Whilst it is recognised that subject areas have different characteristics it is nonetheless necessary to have a consistent baseline informing local actions. This will ensure parity, transparency, and consistency whilst still allowing for local flexibility where appropriate.
- 2.4 It is also recognised that the Policy is new for 2025-26 and, whilst Faculty structures are becoming established some flexibility and pragmatism will be required in order to operationalise the Policy. It is therefore expected that this accompanying document will be updated throughout the year.

### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Responsibility for the administration of these procedures, and any local processes designed to further operationalise work associated with academic misconduct, lies in the main with Faculties and Schools. The owner of this document, from a governance perspective is the Division of Student Experience.

3.2 Updated role descriptors are being prepared and will be published here, once finalised:  
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adge/standards/academicmisconduct/integrity>

#### 4. **PROCEDURES**

##### 4.1 **Definitions (relevant procedural information)**

4.1.1 A piece of assessment may contain more than one type of academic misconduct (e.g. there may be evidence of both plagiarism and fabrication, or a breach of research ethics and collusion).

##### 4.1.2 Plagiarism

*Information on how to treat work submitted to another HEI for credit to follow.*

##### 4.1.3 Collusion

Students should be advised not share their work, their ideas or approaches to summative assessment (where these are individually assessed rather than by group). They should also be discouraged from sharing devices during the period that they are working on their own assessments (up to and including any late submission period) as this could lead to situations where work is accessed by other students. This is because the definition of collusion states “...an act of collusion includes those who...allow others to access their work prior to submission for assessment”.

This information is noted on the Student Hub pages relating to Academic Misconduct and should be provided in assessment briefs and guidance on Canvas sites

##### Breach of in-person examination or test room protocols

4.1.4 The advent of “smart” technology has increased the risk to the integrity of in-person examinations and test rooms. In addition to mobile phones, the use of wrist watches, ear buds, and eyewear, any of which may have built in Bluetooth and AI technology, may form part of an allegation of academic misconduct.

##### 4.1.5 Unauthorised or inappropriate use of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence

- i. Where AI usage is permitted by an assessment brief, the student remains responsible for verifying the accuracy. Where the AI tool has provided false sources or quotations, and the student has not checked them, this will be treated as academic misconduct.
- ii. Per 5.2.1 of the Academic Misconduct Policy, all work submitted for assessment should be written or presented by the student in English, unless otherwise specified by the assessment brief. This means that work, or sections of work, cannot be

written in a language other than that required for the assessment and then translated by a third party (person or electronic service/tool). Such action could result in a case of unauthorised use of digital technologies, which (per 5.1.4 of the Policy) includes in its definition “use of AI or other digital tools, such as translation tools, in an assessment where their use has been prohibited.”

- iii. Where a translation service is required for source used in the assessment that is not available in English, or the language required for the assessment, the student must confirm the section/s of the assessment that has been translated and whether this has been translated by themselves or a third party.

## **4.2 General principles**

- 4.2.1 The assessment brief is a critical element in the investigation of any potential academic misconduct. The detail, clarity, and strength of the brief will help to make outcomes easier to determine. Standardised assessment briefs can help to provide clarity for both staff and students. Where useful module convenors are advised to work closely with their Academic Developers to ensure their assessment brief is robust.
- 4.2.3 Where a proofreading service (whether human or technology based) is used the student must ensure that no substantive changes are made to the content of the assessment prior to submission. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that any changes made comply with the University Proofreading Protocols, and to retain a copy of edits made by the proofreader. Proofreading will not be permitted on some assessments. Where there are concerns that proofreading has led to substantive changes, a case of personation or unauthorised use of digital technologies may be taken forward, based on the authorship of the assessment.
- 4.2.4 Students should retain research data that underpins dissertations or projects until after graduation.
- 4.2.5 Schools must agree and provide students with information on discipline specific referencing norms at the start of their studies. These norms must be notified to students at the start of their studies, through course/module handbooks and/or Canvas sites, module teaching sessions and assessment briefings, as appropriate. Markers must ensure that appropriate referencing norms have been adhered to.
- 4.2.6 All sources of information used in preparing the work being submitted must be fully acknowledged, in an approved format. This includes acknowledging all written and electronic sources. Where work is produced in an examination context it will be sufficient to acknowledge the source without providing a full reference.
- 4.2.7 Students must not take notes or other unauthorised materials/devices into an examination, unless the instructions explicitly state that this is allowed.

- 4.2.8 Per 4.3.5 of the Academic Misconduct Policy, the issue of intent or exceptional circumstances is excluded from determining whether misconduct had occurred or not. Consideration must focus on potential for unfair advantage.
- 4.2.9 The University does not use AI-based detection tools, due to concerns around data protection, potential bias, and the reliability and accuracy of such tools. Given this position, markers should not use these tools when putting forward an allegation of misconduct. More information on the University's position regarding AI in relation to teaching and assessments can be found [here](#).

#### 4.3 **Levels of Academic Misconduct**

- 4.3.1 Per 5.3.1 of the Academic Misconduct Policy, misconduct is categorised by levels of severity, depending on the scope of the breach, any previous cases, and the impact on the assessment; specifically, whether the breach fundamentally undermines the integrity of the work, confers an unfair advantage or otherwise presents a risk to the institution. The stage of study, and/or weighting of the assessment should not determine the level of potential academic misconduct.
- 4.3.2 The level is determined, in the first instance, by the Investigating Officer who should use the examples below as a guide. If the Investigating Officer is not confident in their determination, they can note this and provide a commentary as to why they are not certain, but they cannot defer the determination entirely to the panel.
- 4.3.3 Where a case has been referred to an Academic Misconduct Panel, the Panel can amend the level if this is indicated by the evidence and /or what emerges during the course of the Panel meeting.
- 4.3.4 Level 1 – Limited  
Examples of Limited misconduct may include, indicatively:
- Where a small proportion of the assessed work contains misconduct, i.e. less than 10% of the work, or 1-2 examples of any form of misconduct.
  - Where a minority of references are incorrect, potentially due to errors in use of digital technologies such as AI.
- 4.3.5 Level 2 – Significant  
Examples of Significant misconduct may include:
- Where the assessment contains repeated instances of limited misconduct
  - Where a large proportion of the assessed work contains the misconduct, i.e. multiple, identical passages appear in more than one student's assessment, or where the extent of the fabricated section is small, but the analysis of that section forms a large part of the work.
  - A piece of work which appears to have been produced wholesale by an unauthorised use of AI tools
  - Where ideas and content that are of fundamental importance to the argument or findings of an assessment contain misconduct.

#### 4.3.6 Level 3 - Severe

Examples of Severe misconduct may include:

- Where all or almost all of the assessed work contains the misconduct, such that it is felt that there is none of the student's own work present.
- In cases of breach of research ethics involving human participants and highly sensitive subjects.

#### 4.3.7 No case

If the Investigating Officer believes that the evidence presented is not sufficient to determine whether or not misconduct has occurred at all, they will return the material to the marker with a request for more information. If this is not forthcoming, the Investigating Officer will not proceed with the case.

### 4.4 **Procedure for determining a case of academic misconduct**

#### Initial identification

4.4.1 Where a concern has been raised, during the marking or moderation process, the marker, under the oversight of the module convenor, should take prepare an initial mark-up with reference to the Turnitin report (where relevant) and submit to the Investigating Officer as a potential first case. Where a registered doctoral tutor is involved in the marking process, the module convenor should undertake this work to avoid a situation where a student would be reviewed by another student.

4.4.2 The initial mark-up can consist of light touch notes against some of the concerns, mainly serving to prompt the marker during the student meeting. This should be submitted to the Investigating Officer for confirmation of how to proceed.

#### 4.4.3 First cases

The Investigating Officer should first confirm with relevant colleagues that this is a first incident of level 1 or level 2 academic misconduct (i.e. that there are no previously upheld allegations of academic misconduct on record).

If it is not a first case, or where the Investigating Officer feels this needs to be treated as level 3, then the Panel case process will apply.

Where a first case is confirmed, the Investigating Officer will ask the marker to meet with the student to discuss the assessment and the concerns that potential academic misconduct has occurred. This meeting should take place no later than 10 days after the provisional marks have been published. This should be treated as a learning opportunity rather than being punitive in tone. The marker should note the type/definition of the potential misconduct and ask the student what happened during the preparation of the assessment. This should be done as neutrally as possible to avoid students potentially feeling pressurised into agreeing that misconduct has occurred in order to avoid any further processes or a more severe penalty. **If the student acknowledges the issues with the work and accepts**

**that misconduct did occur** then the marker will complete the process via the following actions:

- Apply the fixed outcome of a mark of 0 for the assessment and require a sit with a 10 percentage point penalty.
- Refer the student to the Academic Practice Workshop. Enrolment on and satisfactory completion of the online Academic Practice Workshop will be recorded by the University. This record will be checked in all cases where a new allegation of academic misconduct is raised. Any further case of misconduct will be recorded on the student's assessment record as a misconduct case, regardless of whether or not the student enrolled on and completed the online Academic Practice Workshop.
- Refer the student to their Academic Personal Tutor (APT) for pastoral support, if necessary.
- Notify the Curriculum and Assessment Officer who will formerly communicate the outcome to the student in writing and make the associated updates to the assessment record.

**If the student reasonably accounts for the suspected misconduct in their explanation, and the marker is prepared to accept this**, then they will complete the process via the following actions:

- Allocate a face value mark that reflects the overall quality of the work and process this mark and feedback in the usual way.
- Refer the student to the Academic Practice Workshop. Enrolment on and satisfactory completion of the online Academic Practice Workshop will be recorded by the University. This record will be checked in all cases where a new allegation of academic misconduct is raised.
- Refer the student to their Academic Personal Tutor (APT) for pastoral support, if necessary.
- Notify the Curriculum and Assessment Officer who will formerly communicate the outcome to the student in writing and make the associated updates to the assessment record.

**If the student fails to attend or attends and denies academic misconduct without a reasonable explanation, and the marker feels a full investigation is therefore required**, then the marker will complete the process via the following actions:

- Confirm to the student that they (the marker) still have concerns about the piece of work and that the student's explanation does not fully account for those concerns. Advise that the assessment will be put forward for further investigation by an academic misconduct panel.
- Reassure the student that this means no outcome has yet been determined and the student will have a further opportunity to put forward their explanation.

- Notify the Curriculum and Assessment Officer that the mark is held pending a full investigation. The CAO will formerly communicate the outcome to the student in writing and notify the Academic Misconduct Office of a potential panel case.
- Prepare the evidence pack. This should include a fully marked up copy of the assessment with examples of the misconduct and a commentary to elaborate on their concerns (where necessary), as well as any source material/references. The assessment brief, and the Canvas information on Academic Misconduct for the module should also be included. The Turnitin Similarity Report can be provided as part of the evidence base, if relevant. However, academic judgement and the interpretation of the Similarity Report should be used to determine a case, rather than any numeric threshold of text matches.
- Note that the mark-up process is essential to the ability of the Investigating Officer, and the Academic Misconduct Panel, to determine the level of academic misconduct and the appropriate penalty to apply. If the marker elects only to highlight one or two instances of fabrication (for example), despite more instances being present in the piece of work, then the Investigating Officer will have to determine a “limited” level of academic misconduct, as that is the only evidence being presented.
- As part of the evidence pack, allocate a face value mark which reflects the marker's opinion of the work, as far as possible with the suspicion of misconduct discounted so that the mark reflects the quality of the work as it stands.
- Submit the evidence pack to the Investigating Officer.

#### 4.4.4 Allegations after a First Case

In the future, should a new allegation of misconduct occur for a student who has already had the benefit of the first case process, the marker should submit a full evidence pack straight to the Investigating Officer who will need to refer the case to the Academic Misconduct Office. If the allegation is one of collusion, this will result in all the students involved being referred to the Academic Misconduct Office, even where it is a first case for one or more of the students. The Panel will determine whether it is appropriate to confirm a first case penalty for those students or not.

#### 4.4.5 Investigating Officer review

Per 4.3.2 of these procedures, the Investigating Officer should now review the evidence pack, consult with colleagues as necessary (e.g. the module convenor, the exam invigilator/exams office) and determine what level of misconduct is present in the work. The Investigating Officer will add any additional comments to the evidence pack and notify the Academic Misconduct Office who will log the allegation.

Where the Investigating Officer feels that the initial mark-up does not contain sufficient evidence of academic misconduct, they can either refer it back to the marker to add to the mark-up or dismiss this as “no case” and require the marker to allocate a face value mark and ensure the feedback reflects the issues with the piece of work.

#### 4.4.6 Notification to the Academic Misconduct Office

Upon receipt of a referral to panel, the Academic Misconduct Office will review the evidence pack and ensure all relevant documentation is included and ready to go forward to a Panel.

They will then organise a panel which will proceed in accordance with the governance and conduct arrangements noted in section 4.7 below.

#### 4.5 Indicative penalties

- 4.5.1 Section 5.5 of the Academic Misconduct Policy provides the indicative penalties available in determining the outcome of an allegation of academic misconduct. For ease of reference, the penalties are copied below:

| Level                | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Indicative penalty if no previous cases                                        | Indicative penalty if previous case/s (expectation that each subsequent case will escalate penalty)                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First Case procedure | A first incident of level 1 or level 2 academic misconduct will receive a fixed outcome and referral to the Academic Practice Workshop where there have been no previous instances of academic misconduct.<br><i>A level 3 breach may be referred to Panel if there is an elevated institutional risk to quality, standards or reputation.</i> | Reduce assessment mark to 0 and require a sit with 10 percentage point penalty | -                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1                    | Limited amount of academic misconduct within the assessment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Reduce assessment mark by 10 percentage points                                 | Reduce assessment mark to 0, OR Reduce module mark to 0                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2                    | Significant amount of academic misconduct within the assessment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Reduce assessment mark to 0                                                    | Reduce assessment mark to 0, OR Reduce module mark to 0, OR<br>Reduce classification by one band, OR<br>Reduce module mark to 0 and disallow resit, OR<br>Expulsion from the University for a period of at least 3 years |
| 3                    | Severe academic misconduct                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Reduce module mark to 0, OR<br>Reduce classification by one band, OR           | Reduce module mark to 0, OR<br>Reduce classification by one band, OR                                                                                                                                                     |

- 4.5.2 Per 5.5.3 of the Policy, penalties may be used singularly or in combination.



4.5.3 First Case penalties can be applied by the marker as an outcome of the student meeting. All other penalties will be applied by an Academic Misconduct Panel.

4.5.4 The Academic Misconduct Panel has the discretion to apply the penalty it feels most appropriate, having conducted the full investigation. This can be a different penalty than that put forward by the Investigating Officer where the evidence indicates this.

#### 4.6 **Academic Misconduct Panels**

##### 4.6.1 Delegated panels

Where cases are clearcut and do not require further investigation (i.e. the student has breached the in person examination or test room protocols), the Academic Misconduct Office will utilise the Delegated Panel process.

The Misconduct Panel Secretary, under the delegated authority of the Misconduct Panel Chair, will process the case and issue the outcome to the student. In these circumstances the student will not be invited to a Panel meeting.

##### Governance arrangements

4.6.2 The Education and Students Regulations Sub-Committee, on behalf of the University Education Committee, must approve the membership pool for academic misconduct panels; staff who have not been approved cannot sit on panels. This should include appropriate academic and professional service staff, and staff should either have, or wish to gain, experience of working with policies and regulations and handling complex issues. The pool can be as large as required.

4.6.3 A panel consists of a minimum of the Chair and two members from the pool. The Chair has the final authority to confirm an outcome if the panel membership does not agree. All panels will take place online and Role descriptors for the misconduct panel Chair and member are provided at:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/academicmisconduct/integrity>

4.6.4 If a panel is not properly constituted or acts outside of its Terms of Reference (provided in Appendix 1 of the Academic Misconduct Policy), any withdrawal decision could be appealed on grounds of procedural irregularity. Chairs must ensure the correct governance is adhered to at all times.

4.6.5 Students that have been referred to a panel will receive a minimum of 5 calendar days' (i.e., to include a weekend) notice. They will be provided with information on the allegation made against them, stated in broad terms, and will be directed to the relevant University regulations/policies. The evidence file will be made available on request for the student to review in advance of the panel meeting. They will be asked to confirm their attendance in advance. They will be informed that they are entitled to attend and are strongly encouraged to do so but that it is not a requirement. The student can elect to submit written evidence instead of, or as well as, attending. In cases of non response, the panel can proceed without the student or any written response.

4.6.6 Students have a right to be accompanied by a member of the University of Sussex faculty or the University of Sussex Students' Union Advice team.

- 4.6.7 An academic representative should be in attendance at every panel to present the allegation. This can be the marker, a member of the marking team, the module convenor, the Investigating Officer, or a subject matter expert with knowledge of the assessment. In extremis, the panel can proceed without the academic representative with the authorisation of the panel Chair, who will review the available evidence to determine whether they can present in place of the academic representative.
- 4.6.8 The outcome should be communicated to the student, in writing, within 10 working days. The outcome should also provide signposting to relevant staff or support services as required, as well as to the academic appeals process. The relevant Faculty professional services team should receive a copy of the outcome for onward administrative actions. At this stage, the marker should review the original face value mark (given per 4.4.3 of these procedures) and confirm, based on the outcome of the panel what the final mark for the assessment should be.
- 4.6.9 The Academic Misconduct Office is required to submit a retrospective annual report to the Education and Students Regulations Sub Committee. The report should provide data on both First Cases and those referred to panel, recording outcomes and cross-referencing course and demographic data in order to identify any trends.

#### Conduct of the Panel

- 4.6.10 The Chair will open the meeting with introductions, and an explanation of how the panel will proceed. This will include the definition of the example(s) of academic misconduct alleged to be present in the assessment, the presentation of the evidence, an opportunity for the student to speak to the allegation and an opportunity for the panel to ask questions of the presenter and the student. After this, the presenter and the student will be moved to a virtual waiting room whilst the panel has a private meeting to consider the outcome. All parties will rejoin the meeting for the confirmation of the outcome, which as per 4.6.8, will also be provided in writing within 10 working days.
- 4.6.11 Where the student agrees that academic misconduct has occurred in the assessment in question, the outcome will be an upheld instance of academic misconduct, with the panel ensuring an appropriate penalty is set from the options available with the Academic Misconduct Policy.
- 4.6.12 Where the student denies that academic misconduct has occurred in the assessment in question, the outcome will be determined on the balance of probability, using the evidence presented to the panel.
- 4.6.13 Where the outcome is “no case to answer”, i.e. a dismissal of the allegation where the panel agrees that academic misconduct has not occurred or has not be satisfactorily proven, then no penalty will be applied, and the work will be referred back the marker, and the face value mark (which may or may not be a pass mark) will be used for progression and classification purposes.

- 4.6.14 The student will normally be told the outcome and the penalty at the end of the meeting. However, the outcome can include adjourning the panel to a new date to be established, where issues emerge that make this a more appropriate decision. The outcome can also include a deferral of the decision for consultation regarding the regulations. In either instance, the student will be kept updated and a decision must be made in a timely manner.

## 5. **Academic Misconduct after an award has been made**

- 5.1 On occasion, the University receives a communication raising a concern, or making an allegation, relating to academic misconduct from a former student. In all such cases, the communication should be passed to the Academic Misconduct Office for a response. The Academic Misconduct Office will send an acknowledgement to the third party.
- 5.2 The Academic Misconduct Office will conduct preliminary enquiries and refer the matter to the PVC (Education & Students), or nominee for a decision as to whether to pursue the matter further.

END.

| <b>Review / Contacts / References</b>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Document title:                                  | Procedural Information to support the Attendance, Absence and Engagement Policy                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Date published:                                  | October 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Approving body:                                  | N/A - procedural documents do not require formal committee approval                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Last review date:                                | October 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Revision history:                                | October 2024 – first iteration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Next review date:                                | September 2026 (annual review to ensure operational processes keep pace with BAU changes)                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Related internal policies, procedures, guidance: | <a href="#">Attendance, Absence and Engagement Policy</a><br><a href="#">Procedures on Research Degrees</a><br><a href="#">Academic Appeal Regulations</a><br><a href="#">Policy on the Creation and Management of University Policies</a><br><a href="#">UKVI Sponsorship Duties</a> |
| Division / School:                               | Division of Student Experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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