

# Student Academic Misconduct Code of Practice

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## 1. Preface for Students

- 1.1 This Code of Practice has been produced for both students and staff, including Academic Conduct Officers and overseas link tutors. It sets out the University's approach to academic misconduct and provides detailed descriptions of processes and roles of people involved in these processes. Students are advised to refer in particular to the following sections:
- Section 4 – [Good Academic Practice](#)
  - Section 5 – [What is Academic Misconduct](#)
  - Section 7 – [Proofreading](#)
  - Section 14 - [Penalties for Academic Misconduct.](#)
- 1.2 The University takes all reported incidences of academic misconduct seriously and seeks to ensure that they are dealt with efficiently and appropriately. If proven, penalties can range from formal warnings to termination of studies by the University with a bar on any future enrolment with the University for the most serious or repeat offences. It is therefore very important that you understand how to prepare for and complete assessments honestly. In order to assist you with this there are various resources and help available including:
- School and Programme handbooks
  - <https://www.keele.ac.uk/studentacademicconduct/>
  - <https://keelesu.com/advice/academic/plagiarism/>
- 1.3 If you have any questions or would like advice about the academic misconduct process, you can contact the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct team (Email: [misconduct@keele.ac.uk](mailto:misconduct@keele.ac.uk)) or Advice & Support at Keele (ASK) in the Students' Union (Email: [su.ask@keele.ac.uk](mailto:su.ask@keele.ac.uk)).

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 Students must produce work for assessment on time, honestly and without attempting to gain an unfair advantage. All the work that they submit must be their own work, and any other person's work or ideas must be appropriately acknowledged. Even when this is not explicitly specified, all work a student submits must meet these requirements.
- 2.2 The University treats academic misconduct very seriously and penalties will be given if academic misconduct is proven (more details about this can be found in section 14). Students can be excluded from the University for very serious or repeat offences.
- 2.3 This Code of Practice outlines the University's approach to suspected academic misconduct in an assessment, and the penalties that can be given for proven cases. Students should be aware that a record of academic misconduct may have significant academic and professional implications (see section 15.4).
- 2.4 The University will provide students with information on academic misconduct. Students must ensure they are aware of what academic misconduct is and how it can be avoided (<https://www.keele.ac.uk/studentacademicconduct/>).
- 2.5 In order to identify academic misconduct, the University can submit any assessment to text/patent matching software in order to identify non-original text. The marker can then check to see if the work has been properly referenced.

### 3. Scope

- 3.1 This code applies to all work submitted by current students to the University, including students studying at partner institutions. Former students including graduates will be treated in the spirit of this code unless the regulation in place at the time of their registration does not allow this.
- 3.2 This code also applies to draft work submitted to tutors for comment (e.g. draft chapters of dissertations) where the tutor suspects that the student has commissioned work (see section 6) or has falsified any data.
- 3.3 This code applies to all modules a student is taking at the University and not just modules being taken as part of their principal programme.
- 3.4 In cases of suspected or proven academic misconduct, the University can investigate previously marked work.
- 3.5 Students studying on programmes that are subject to [Regulation B5, Fitness to Practise](#) who breach the academic misconduct procedure will be referred to the relevant Head of School for additional consideration.
- 3.6 [Regulation B1, Student Discipline](#), provides separate procedures that will deal with any discipline issues that arise during the investigation of academic misconduct (e.g. verbal abuse of an examination invigilator).

### 4. Good Academic Practice

- 4.1 Students can get help and advice on how to improve their academic practice and skills by visiting the Write Direction team's web page at <https://www.keele.ac.uk/kiite/workingwithstudents/academicskills/>, where they can access online resources, 1:1 support, and workshops.
- 4.2 International students and students whose first language is not English are encouraged to contact the Language Centre to arrange a 'One-to-One' tutorial to discuss their work with one of the English Language tutors. Appointments can be booked online at <https://www.keele.ac.uk/study/languagecentre/11tutorials/>, in person at the Language Centre office in CBB0.001 or by contacting the Language Centre administrators ([enl@keele.ac.uk](mailto:enl@keele.ac.uk) Tel: 733013).
- 4.3 The research governance tool-kit (<https://www.keele.ac.uk/research/raise/governanceintegrityandethics/>) provides key information and guidance for students wishing to conduct research that involves, for example but not limited to, human subjects, their data or bodily material, security sensitive information or overseas activity.
- 4.4 Academic Conduct Officers may ask students to provide evidence that demonstrates that they prepared for and wrote the work. This could include copies of any drafts of the work, the articles/books that were read, and any notes made. Students are advised to retain all draft copies of their work to provide evidence that they wrote the work if challenged.
- 4.5 Academic Conduct Officers and Misconduct Committees will also need to know if anyone proofread a student's work. If the work was proofread, students should ensure they are able to provide copies of the work before and after it was proofread, along with copies of any correspondence between themselves and the proofreader.
- 4.6 Students are responsible for the security of their work, and for not knowingly allowing others to pass off their work as their own. Not keeping work secure could

have professional implications. A student may be guilty of collusion if they pass work they have previously completed to another student who then submits it, in whole or in part, as their own.

## 5. What is Academic Misconduct?

- 5.1 Academic misconduct is any action or attempted action which may result in the student gaining an unfair academic advantage in an assessment<sup>1</sup> or might assist someone else to gain an unfair advantage. It also includes any activity that is likely to undermine the integrity essential to scholarship and research, such as distributing advertising materials for essay mill sites, sharing work online including lecture notes or the uploading and selling of online exam papers. The types of action that will be classed as academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, the following:
- (a) Plagiarism - the student copies words or ideas from another person and presents those words/ideas as their own in an assessment without properly acknowledging and citing the source(s);
  - (b) Self-plagiarism - the student submits the same or almost identical work for more than one assessment without proper acknowledgement. (N.B. Students will not be guilty of self-plagiarism if they are repeating a module and are given the same assignment. Schools should ensure that, where a suitable alternative exists, students who are repeating are given different assignments where possible);
  - (c) Collusion - a piece of work is prepared by more than one student, including work used for a piece of authorised collaborative group-work, and is presented in whole or in part for assessment as if it were the student's own work;
  - (d) Contract Cheating (also known as commissioning) - the commissioning and/or submission of work to be assessed which is not the student's own work and presenting it as if it were (see section 6 for more details);
  - (e) Giving another student a copy of all or part of one's own work so that they can use it in the submission of an assignment;
  - (f) Taking a copy of another student's work without their permission;
  - (g) Undertaking an assessment activity on behalf of another student such as writing part of, or all, of another student's assignment or collection and analysis of data unless given permission by the module tutor to do this;
  - (h) The falsification of data or sources;
  - (i) Falsification of official documents or signatures, where these are used for academic benefit;
  - (j) Attempting to manipulate an assessment to avoid academic misconduct being found;
  - (k) Breaches of research and ethics policies<sup>2</sup> e.g. carrying out research without appropriate permission.
  - (l) Allowing someone else to write or make material changes to your work. Further details are in Section 6;

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<sup>1</sup> Assessments include (but are not limited to) examinations, open-book assessments, class tests, flexible class tests, Object Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) and coursework.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/policyzone/data/researchmisconductprocedure/>

- (m) Using generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools in an assessment to present work as one's own, without proper attribution, or where explicitly prohibited;
- (n) Having work translated from another language by another person or by using a translation service or software and submitting it as your own work;
- (o) Translating work written by someone else in another language and submitting it as your own work without properly acknowledging and citing the source(s);
- (p) Gaining or trying to gain access to any assessment details, e.g. examination paper, before the release of the assessment details;
- (q) Possession of unauthorised material and/or electronic devices in an examination, class test, or other assessment exercise;
- (r) Communicating or attempting to communicate with someone else, apart from an invigilator, during an examination or class test or subsequently about the assessment with someone who will be taking the examination/class test at a later time;
- (s) Copying, or attempting to copy another student's answers during an examination or class test;
- (t) Continuing to write (or continuing to perform whatever task is being examined) after the end of the examination or class test;
- (u) Allowing another person to impersonate yourself or impersonating another person in an examination, test or hearing.
- (v) Distributing the questions or other relevant information relating to the assessment during the assessment window<sup>3</sup> for an open-book assessment or a flexible class test.
- (w) Working with another person to prepare answers for an open-book assessment or a flexible class test.
- (x) Obtaining or attempting to obtain unpermitted assistance in the creation of the assignment during an open-book or a flexible class test.

## 6. Contract cheating<sup>4</sup>

- 6.1 Contract cheating, which is also referred to as commissioning, is a very serious form of academic misconduct. Contract cheating occurs when a student commissions and/or obtains work for assessment that has been written, either in full or in part, by another person, where input from another person is not allowed. Money does not have to be exchanged in order for work to be 'commissioned'. Commissioned work might be prewritten or specifically prepared for the student and might be obtained from a company or individual. Commissioning does not just refer to essay mills<sup>5</sup> but

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<sup>3</sup> This is the time in which students are able to complete and submit the assessment. It is normally 28 hours.

<sup>4</sup>In June 2020 the QAA produced the second edition of a guidance document 'Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education' which can be found at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/contracting-to-cheat-in-higher-education-2nd-edition.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The QAA definition of an essay mill is "An organisation or individual, usually with an online presence, that contracts with students to complete an assignment or assignments for a fee".

to other situations where a friend or family member completes the whole or part of the assessment.

- 6.2 If it is suspected that a student has submitted work that has not been written by them, the student will normally be asked to attend an interview with the marker and School Academic Conduct Officer. In the interview, the student will need to demonstrate that they understand the content of the work and evidence how they wrote the work (see section 10.10). It is very important that students keep copies of any drafts and materials that they use when researching and writing assignments.
- 6.3 If the student is not able to assure the marker and Academic Conduct Officer that they are the author of the assignment, the case will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration. If the student is able to demonstrate that they had the work proofread, but the proofreading has gone beyond what is allowed in the proofreading guidance (see section 7), the Academic Conduct Officer will deal with the case as a major offence of plagiarism.
- 6.4 The recommended penalty for submitting commissioned work is termination of studies by the University. (see the tariff in section 14.12).

## 7. Proofreading

- 7.1 Students might choose to get support from their peers when preparing their assignments, such as discussing the subject matter, exchanging ideas and/or receiving suggestions for improving the work. This is peer-support and the university accepts this as a reasonable expectation when completing coursework/assessment. **However, peers must not make any changes to the work; students must make decisions about and draft the content of their work themselves.**
- 7.2 The University provides guidance to all students that explains good academic practice in relation to third-party proofreading of academic work. Students are allowed to use a proofreader for an assessment, as outlined in the proofreading guidance, unless they are told it is not permitted for that module or assignment. The guidance, which can be found at: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/studentacademicconduct>, sets out what a proofreader can or cannot do.
- 7.3 In summary, the guidance states that you must not allow anyone, other than a Keele member of staff or disability support worker supporting you, to go beyond what is permitted in the proofreading guidance. The following list is taken from the proofreading guidance document and sets out what a student must not allow anyone to do:
- (a) translate the work into English or any other language;
  - (b) rewrite passages in order to clarify meaning;
  - (c) change the text of the work so as to develop the ideas and arguments;
  - (d) change the ideas and arguments put forward within the work;
  - (e) reduce the length of the work so that it falls within the specified word limit;
  - (f) contribute additional material to the original;
  - (g) correct information within the work;
  - (h) rewrite sections where the argument or logic is faulty;
  - (i) substantially change the content of a piece of work;

- (j) change the words or figures or notation (except to identify the correct spelling or verb tense of the word used);
  - (k) rearrange passages of text, sequence of code or section of other material;
  - (l) reformat the material;
  - (m) check calculations or formulae;
  - (n) rewrite formulae, equations or computer code;
  - (o) re-label figures or diagrams;
  - (p) correct faulty references or compile reference lists/bibliographies.
- 7.4 If you use a proofreader you must declare this on the title page of your work when it is submitted and that you have complied with the proofreading guidance.

## **8. Roles and responsibilities**

### **Academic Staff**

- 8.1 Academic staff who suspect academic misconduct in an assignment must refer the matter to the Academic Conduct Officer for consideration.
- 8.2 Markers must not rely solely on the similarity index in a text/patent matching software report when deciding whether to refer a case. Markers must consider the substance of the copied material, not only the quantity. It is a matter of academic judgement. When referring the case, the marker may be asked to provide copies of the key sources that have been plagiarised.
- 8.3 The University provides guidance on the use of Turnitin and how to interpret its originality reports through the Keele Institute for Innovation and Teaching Excellence (KIITE).

### **Academic Conduct Officers (ACOs)**

- 8.4 Academic Conduct Officers are responsible for investigating allegations of academic misconduct that take place in their School/Centre or faculty. At least one member of academic staff or senior professional services staff in each School/Centre fulfils the role of Academic Conduct Officer. The Head of each School/Centre appoints the Academic Conduct Officer and the Deputy Academic Conduct Officer if required. Partner institutions responsible for collaborative programmes will also appoint an Academic Conduct Officer.
- 8.5 Deputy Academic Conduct Officers will assist Academic Conduct Officers with investigating cases in their School or faculty by sharing the workload. They will deal with any cases where the Academic Conduct Officer has a conflict of interest (see section 8.8). Any reference in this code to the Academic Conduct Officer also applies to the Deputy Academic Conduct Officer.
- 8.6 Training will be provided centrally to new and ongoing Academic Conduct Officers.
- 8.7 Academic Conduct Officers are only permitted to make decisions on first and second offences of plagiarism and collusion in work submitted for modules, and first offences of misconduct in an open book assessment, class test or flexible class test. All other offences must be referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration, after an initial investigation by the Academic Conduct Officer.
- 8.8 An Academic Conduct Officer cannot deal with any cases where there is a conflict of interest e.g. they have been involved in the marking of that student's assessment for



the module; they are the student's academic mentor or supervisor for the piece of work in question.

- 8.9 It is the responsibility of the Academic Conduct Officer to check if there are any prior offences on a student's record in order to ensure that they can deal with the case. This information will also be needed when selecting the penalty.
- 8.10 Academic Conduct Officers can only issue penalties in accordance with the tariff listed in section 14. If, for any reason, they think a penalty is inappropriate (e.g. evidence of a deliberate intent to deceive), they must refer the case to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration.
- 8.11 Students are able to appeal decisions made by Academic Conduct Officers. See section 16 for more detail on this.

### **Academic Misconduct Committee**

- 8.12 The Academic Misconduct Committee membership list consists of:
- A minimum of 3 Chairs who will be senior academic members of staff;
  - A minimum of 3 members of academic staff from each Faculty.
- 8.13 An Academic Misconduct Committee meeting will consist of:
- A Chair who is not from the School where the alleged offence has taken place;
  - A member of academic staff from the Faculty in which the alleged offence has taken place but is not from the student's School;
  - A member of academic staff from another Faculty.
- 8.14 The Academic Misconduct Committee will consider all allegations of academic misconduct that do not fall within the duties of an Academic Conduct Officer (see section 8.7). Where a case is proven, the Committee can issue penalties as outlined in section 14.
- 8.15 The processes in this Code of Practice also apply to cases of alleged academic misconduct by students studying on a Keele programme at a partner institution. Cases will be dealt with either via video conferencing with the Keele Misconduct Committee or by the collaborative partner if this responsibility was agreed as part of the contractual arrangements related to the partnership. Where the latter is the case, the partner will arrange a local committee. This local committee will act as a Keele Academic Misconduct Committee, following the same processes and informed by its case law. The constitution of the partner's committee will be approved in advance by the Head of Academic Quality and Student Conduct. It will report its recommendations to the Head of Academic Quality and Student Conduct for approval before the student is informed of the outcome. Recommendations for termination of studies must be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Keele.
- 8.16 All appeals against Academic Misconduct Committee decisions (both at Keele and partner institutions) will be dealt with using the appeals procedure outlined in section 16.

### **Staff Presenting Cases to the Academic Misconduct Committee**

- 8.17 Most cases will be presented to the Committee by a member of staff who will normally either be an examination invigilator or a member of staff (usually the Academic Conduct Officer) from the School where the alleged offence has taken

place. The Academic Conduct Officer may occasionally be accompanied by other staff in the School who have been involved in the case.

- 8.18 The member of staff will present a written report explaining the nature of the alleged offence and provide supporting evidence obtained during the investigation. The report and supporting evidence will be given to the student and the Academic Misconduct Committee in advance of the meeting. At the meeting, the presenting member of staff will explain the nature of the alleged offence and answer any questions the Committee have.
- 8.19 Normally the case will be presented in person. However, if the case is straightforward and is clearly presented in writing, the Chair of the Academic Misconduct Committee may agree to consider the case without the requirement that the case is presented by a member of staff. The student will always be given the opportunity to attend and be heard about their case.

## **9. Academic misconduct procedure**

### **Initiating the process**

- 9.1 Examiners (internal or external) or supervisors who have good cause to suspect academic misconduct (as defined in section 5) at the point of submission or during the preparation stages, must report the case to the relevant Academic Conduct Officer and produce any evidence they have in support of the allegation.
- 9.2 The Academic Conduct Officer will consider the evidence and will decide whether there is a case to answer. If there is no case to answer the examiners will be instructed to complete the marking process.
- 9.3 If there is a case to answer, the Academic Conduct Officer must first decide if case falls within their jurisdiction (see section 8.7).
- 9.4 The Academic Conduct Officer must consult with the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Team to check if there are previous offences of academic misconduct on record.
- 9.5 For any case not within their jurisdiction, the Academic Conduct Officer will carry out an initial investigation, which may involve interviewing the student, and will then refer the case to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration.
- 9.6 Invigilators and internal or external examiners must report any allegation of cheating or other misconduct in an examination or class test to the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Manager. If there is a case for investigation, the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Manager will inform the student of the nature of the allegation and of the arrangements for an investigation by the Academic Misconduct Committee.
- 9.7 If a member of staff suspects that a student has submitted falsified evidence or documentation (e.g. an appeal form or exceptional circumstances claim) in order to gain unfair academic advantage, they must report this to the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Manager who will decide if there is a case for investigation. If there is a case, the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Manager will inform the student of the nature of the allegation and of the arrangements for an investigation by the Academic Misconduct Committee.
- 9.8 Alleged ethics offences committed by students on taught programmes will be referred to the Chair of the School Student Project Ethics Committee (S-SPEC). S-SPECs will be responsible for handling alleged minor offences. S-SPECs will also be responsible for deciding whether a case should be referred to the Academic

Misconduct Committee. Only major or repeat minor offences will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee.

- 9.9 Alleged research offences will initially be referred to the Research Integrity Team for consideration and referral to the appropriate Research Ethics Committee(s). The Committee(s) will consider the case and decide if ethical approval should be withdrawn. The case may then be referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration and will be presented by the appropriate Academic Conduct Officer, with expert advice from the Research Integrity Team as to the severity of the offence.
- 9.10 Any case involving a former student will initially be investigated by the School Academic Conduct Officer, supported by the Student Appeals Complaints and Conduct team<sup>6</sup>. If evidence of serious academic misconduct is found the case will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration.

## **10. Investigation by the Academic Conduct Officer**

- 10.1 After receiving an allegation of academic misconduct, the Academic Conduct Officer will carry out an investigation. This may include but is not limited to:
- (a) Past academic misconduct history;
  - (b) Academic performance;
  - (c) Attendance/engagement;
  - (d) Text/patent matching software report;
  - (e) Nature of the assessment;
  - (f) Any known exceptional circumstances relevant to the module in question.
- 10.2 The Academic Conduct Officer will invite the student for an 'investigating interview' if the evidence suggests that further investigation is necessary.
- 10.3 The examiner making the allegation may be present at this meeting or submit information for consideration.
- 10.4 The student will normally be given at least 7 calendar days' notice of the meeting (see section 11.1).
- 10.5 If the student does not attend, without good reason, a decision will be made in their absence.
- 10.6 In cases of possible collusion, the Academic Conduct Officer will decide whether to interview the students individually or together as a group. Where it is decided to hold a group interview, the Academic Conduct Officer must offer the students the opportunity to be interviewed separately and to submit an individual statement for consideration following a group meeting before a decision is made regarding the alleged offence.
- 10.7 Following the interview, the Academic Conduct Officer will decide whether or not the case is proven,<sup>7</sup> or refer the case to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration. If the Academic Conduct Officer finds the case proven, they will decide a penalty in accordance with the tariffs outlined in section 14.

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<sup>6</sup> The protocol 'Suspected Academic Misconduct by Former Students' will be invoked in such cases.

<sup>7</sup> See section 13 for definition of 'Proven'.

- 10.8 If the Academic Conduct Officer is not able to make a decision after interviewing the student(s) involved in the case, the case should be referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration.
- 10.9 The Academic Conduct Officer will confirm the outcome of the interview to the student in writing.
- 10.10 Where it is suspected that a student has not written either part of or the whole of a piece of assessed work, the investigation may include, at the discretion of the Academic Conduct Officer, an interview. Such an interview would be conducted by the Academic Conduct Officer, normally with the assistance of a relevant member of academic staff. The student will be given a minimum of 7 calendar days' notice for the interview. The interview will provide the student with the opportunity to demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the academic subject matter and to provide evidence that they wrote the specific item(s) of assessment in question. Following the interview, the Academic Conduct Officer will decide whether there is sufficient evidence to refer the case to the Academic Misconduct Committee for further consideration.

## **11. Student Support and Representation**

- 11.1 Students are strongly encouraged to be accompanied to any formal meetings with either the Academic Conduct Officer or the Academic Misconduct Committee (see sections 6.2, 10.2 and 12.2). This would normally be a member of the ASK (Advice and Support at Keele) Team, a current student, an elected officer of the Keele University Students' Union or the Keele Postgraduate Association or a member of staff.
- 11.2 The University has the discretion to accept other accompanying persons where this is deemed necessary. If you wish to be accompanied by an alternative supporter you must request this via the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct team in the first instance and no later than 48 hours in advance of the meeting.
- 11.3 The accompanying person may attend the parts of the meeting the student is invited to attend, even if the student chooses not to attend in person.
- 11.4 If being accompanied by someone internal to the University as set out in 11.1, students must give the Academic Conduct Officer or the Academic Misconduct Committee the name and status of the accompanying friend or representative at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. Students will normally be given at least 7 calendar days' notice of the meeting.
- 11.5 Any supporter or representative accompanying the student to a meeting with an Academic Conduct Officer, or a meeting of the Academic Misconduct Committee, is there in a supporting capacity. The student may ask them to speak on their behalf or clarify particular points.

## **12. Academic Misconduct Committee procedure**

- 12.1 The procedure for an investigation conducted by the Academic Misconduct Committee will normally follow the following arrangements.
- 12.2 The student will be given a letter inviting them to the meeting of the Academic Misconduct Committee. The letter will also set out the nature of the allegation and a copy of the documentation that will be presented to the Committee. This letter will be sent to the student normally a minimum of 7 calendar days in advance of the meeting.

- 12.3 The Committee will be made aware of all previous offences of academic misconduct when considering a case. Unproven offences will not be disclosed to the Committee (see section 15.6). The student will be given a copy of the relevant documents that the Committee is given that relate to these previous offences.
- 12.4 The student will be informed of their right to call witnesses, give evidence and to be accompanied (see section 11 for who is allowed to accompany a student).
- 12.5 The student will be informed that, if they are not able to attend the meeting on the arranged day, they must inform the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Team in writing giving the reason why. The team will consult with the Chair of the Academic Misconduct Committee to decide if there is good reason for the meeting to be postponed to a later date.
- 12.6 The student can submit a response to the allegation. This must be received at least 48 hours prior to the meeting and must include any previously unknown circumstances and supporting evidence which could support them. The Committee can ignore any circumstances discussed at the meeting that were either not included in the student response or not accompanied by supporting evidence. This statement will be given to the presenting member of staff (see section 8.17) and the Committee.
- 12.7 If the student fails to attend without good reason, the Academic Misconduct Committee may deal with the case in their absence.
- 12.8 The format of the meeting which may take place in person or on Microsoft Teams will normally be as outlined in sections 12.11-12.20. However, the Chair can allow the conduct of the meeting to vary if necessary. For example, adjourning, to allow conflicting evidence to be resolved. If the presenting member of staff is not able to attend, the case may proceed in their absence using the documentation provided if the Chair of the Committee determines the case is straightforward.
- 12.9 The University may decide to make an audio/video recording of the meeting. The student will be informed of this in the letter inviting them to the meeting (see section 12.2).
- 12.10 If the student does not wish the meeting to be recorded, they must inform the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Manager no less than 48 hours before the meeting, so that a note taker can be arranged.
- 12.11 The Committee will first discuss the case in private and agree what questions they need to ask.
- 12.12 The student, their supporter or representative (if attending) and the presenting member of staff will join the Committee at the same time. Any witness(es) may be called as required during the meeting.
- 12.13 The Chair will introduce the other staff attending, and any others present, by name and explain the responsibilities of the members of the Committee.
- 12.14 The Chair will explain the procedure of the meeting and the powers of the Committee.
- 12.15 The Chair will invite the presenting member of staff to present the case and the Committee will then be given the opportunity to ask questions.
- 12.16 The Chair will then ask the student or representative to explain the events leading up to the alleged academic misconduct and the Committee will be given the opportunity to ask questions. The student can call witnesses at this point.
- 12.17 The Committee can ask the presenting member of staff further questions if there is a discrepancy between the student's and the presenting member of staff's account.

- 12.18 The presenting member of staff and the student cannot ask each other questions.
- 12.19 The Committee will then ask the student if there is anything they wish the Committee to take into consideration. The student will be asked if they wish the presenting member of staff to leave before speaking to the Committee about any mitigation.
- 12.20 Once the Chair is satisfied that all questioning is completed, the student, their representative and the presenting member of staff (if still present) will leave. The Academic Misconduct Committee will then decide if the case is proven, and if so, what penalty will be given (see section 14).
- 12.21 If for any reason the Committee requires further clarification of any aspect of the case, the student and their supporter/representative (if attending) and the presenting member of staff may be invited back into the meeting.
- 12.22 The Academic Misconduct Committee's decision will be confirmed in writing. The outcome letter will form the record of the meeting and will include who attended, a summary of the proceedings, and the reason for the decision taken, including any penalty that is applied. The outcome letter will also give information about the student's right to submit an appeal, as outlined in section 16.

### **13. Standard and Burden of Proof**

- 13.1 It is the University's responsibility to prove an allegation of academic misconduct. When deciding if the student has committed academic misconduct, the University has to be confident, on the basis of the available evidence, that it is 'more likely than not' that misconduct has occurred. This is called proof on 'the balance of probabilities'. Decisions must be supported by evidence; it is not enough to simply believe that something is likely to have happened.
- 13.2 The student's intentions are not relevant to whether or not they have committed an offence of academic misconduct. A student's intentions, if they can be determined, will only be relevant in determining whether the standard penalty is appropriate.

### **14. Penalties**

- 14.1 The University's academic misconduct procedures, and its tariff of penalties, are designed to encourage students who have demonstrated poor academic practice, or been found guilty of academic misconduct, to reflect on and improve their academic working practices, with appropriate support.
- 14.2 In cases of alleged breach of examination regulations and procedure where the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Manager decides that there has only been a technical breach of the examination regulations and procedures and that no academic advantage was sought or obtained by the student, the manager *may* issue a warning letter. Repeated breaches of this kind will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee.
- 14.3 Offences of plagiarism/collusion will be defined as either minor or major offences in accordance with the definitions listed in Annex A.
- 14.4 Exceptional circumstances will not normally be taken into account when determining a penalty for academic misconduct offences as it is expected that students will have used the exceptional circumstances process to ask for an extension or deferment. If

it is decided that there are valid exceptional circumstances and that there is a good reason as to why the exceptional circumstances process was not used, they will normally only be taken into account if appropriate supporting evidence has been provided. Where it is agreed that the exceptional circumstances disclosed by a student are relevant, the penalty may be varied but the offence will remain on the student's record.

### **Penalties issued by Academic Conduct Officers**

- 14.5 The tariff in section 14.12 sets out the scope of the Academic Conduct Officer's jurisdiction and the fixed levels of penalty available to them. It applies to students in programmes at all academic levels.
- 14.6 The Academic Conduct Officers will use their academic judgement in plagiarism and collusion cases to decide if a case is poor academic practice, a minor, or a major offence. They will take into account the level of study, background of study, nature of the assessment, the quality of the copied text, and any previous offences on record.
- 14.7 The Academic Conduct Officer can require a student to take additional instruction in the expectations and requirements of academic study and behaviour. For first offences of plagiarism, Academic Conduct Officers should ensure that students have the opportunity to learn from their mistake and direct them to appropriate support and guidance.

### **Penalties issued by the Academic Misconduct Committee**

- 14.8 In proven cases, the Committee can impose any of the penalties set out in the tariff (see section 14.12 onwards) but is not restricted to these and can impose another penalty provided this is appropriate and proportionate. If the Academic Misconduct Committee decides that a student's studies should be terminated, the decision must be ratified by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. If the student appeals, the appeal will be heard by the Academic Misconduct Appeals Committee (see section 16) and any decision for termination of studies must be ratified by the Vice-Chancellor.
- 14.9 Where a collaborative partner holds its own Academic Misconduct Committee, any penalties must be approved by the Head of Academic Quality and Student Conduct before they are imposed. This is to ensure consistency with similar cases dealt with by Keele's Academic Misconduct Committee.
- 14.10 The tariff below lists the penalties that will normally be applied for a proven offence. The Committee will consider the standard penalty in relation to the type of offence and will decide if it is appropriate taking into account the following:
  - (a) The academic level of the student;
  - (b) Extent of the plagiarism or collusion (minor/major);
  - (c) Previous academic misconduct history of the student;
  - (d) Exceptional circumstances (see section 14.4);
  - (e) Any procedural irregularities;
  - (f) Evidence of any intention to deceive;
  - (g) Nature of the work.
- 14.11 The Committee may also consider the following:

- (a) Where a reassessment opportunity is allowed, should the student be permitted to resubmit the same piece of work or not (following consultation with the relevant School where necessary);
- (b) If a note of mitigation should be placed on the student's record about any circumstances surrounding the offence;
- (c) Where there is a subsequent fitness to practise issue, whether the Committee wish to pass on any information.
- (d) In proven cases involving graduates, Academic Misconduct Committee will make a recommendation to the Senate for the academic award to be revoked or amended.
- (e) In proven cases where it is decided that the student (or student who has withdrawn or completed their studies) has submitted work written wholly or in part by a third party, the Academic Misconduct Committee will decide, in consultation with the School Academic Conduct Officer, if assessments previously submitted by the student should be looked at to decide if there is any evidence to show that these assessments were also written by a third party. The procedure for dealing with allegations of academic misconduct where contract cheating is suspected will be followed if evidence is found. While this investigation is underway, the University will withhold the release of any award or marks for the assignments in question.

### **Tariff of penalties**

- 14.12 The following table lists the recommended penalties that will be given by either the Academic Conduct Officer or the Academic Misconduct Committee for proven offences. Academic Misconduct Officers are only permitted to issue penalties 1-6 and 13. If the Academic Conduct Officer decides the case warrants a more serious penalty (e.g. suspected contract cheating) then the case must be referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration.
- 14.13 Academic Conduct Officers are empowered to vary penalties 1-6 and 13 in the following circumstances:
- If the student discloses exceptional circumstances to the Academic Conduct Officer and asks for these to be taken into account, the Academic Conduct Officer is empowered to consider the exceptional circumstances (but see section 14.4) using the guidance document '*Guidance for Academic Conduct Officers when students ask for exceptional circumstances to be considered*' and if accepted to amend the penalty as follows. For a first minor offence (penalty 3 in the tariff table), the student will be permitted to submit an acceptable version of the work for an uncapped mark. For offences listed in 4-6 and 13 of the tariff table, the student will be allowed a further assessment opportunity of the plagiarised submission to be classed as the same attempt.
  - If the penalty for a first offence is in a reassessment and will result in the student failing the programme of study the Academic Conduct Officer is permitted to exceptionally allow a further reassessment opportunity.
  - Where the offence has taken place in a small part of an assessment unit (e.g. 1 practical out of 10) which would result in all assessment components being set to 0, the Academic Conduct Officer is permitted to lower the penalty so it only applies to the piece of work in question.
- 14.14 As stated in Section 14.8, the Committee can impose any of the penalties set out in the tariff but is not restricted to these and can impose another penalty provided this is appropriate and proportionate. In practice, this means that the given penalty can be less or more severe, at the discretion of the Committee. The reasons for varying



the penalty must be recorded in the record of the meeting (see section 12.22). Where the offence/assessment does not fall within the offences/assessments listed in the tariff, the Committee can agree a suitable penalty.

- 14.15 Multiple instances of alleged plagiarism in the same module will be classified as individual offences.
- 14.16 Multiple offences of alleged plagiarism will be classed as concurrent offences if they occur before the student receives notification, in writing, that they have been found guilty of academic misconduct.
- 14.17 Where there is a prior history of examination misconduct, the Academic Conduct Officer may choose to refer the case of alleged plagiarism/collusion to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration.

	<b>Type of offence</b>	<b>Recommended Penalty<sup>8</sup></b>
1	Low-level poor academic practice (no previous offences)	Issue of a warning.
2	A first instance of giving another student a copy of all or part of their own work which results in poor academic practice or academic misconduct.  Further offences of this nature will be treated as first major offences.	Issue of a warning.
3	First offence of plagiarism or collusion.  First offence of unpermitted use of generative artificial intelligence tools in the production of an assignment.  Penalty for minor offence (taught and research degrees).	The original mark, if any, is held back until an acceptable version is submitted. (Not reassessment) <sup>9</sup> . The final mark will be capped at the pass mark and cannot exceed the original mark, if given before the investigation. The student must take appropriate instruction and practice in academic writing.

<sup>8</sup> Notes:

- (a) Module marks are capped at the minimum pass mark if they include any reassessment.
- (b) The assessment units are those defined in the electronic Student Records System (SCIMS) for each module.
- (c) Setting the module mark to zero means setting all elements of assessment for the module to zero, whether first or reassessments unless it is not feasible for a student undertake reassessment of certain components e.g. practicals.

<sup>9</sup> The work must be re-drafted to either receive a capped mark or a fail mark. If the student makes no attempt to re-draft the work, a mark of 0 will be awarded for the assignment. If the student resubmits the work and it is still not acceptable, the student will be given a final opportunity to resubmit the work in an acceptable format and will be warned that if they submit a further unacceptable version they will receive a mark of 0 for the assignment. If the original mark is a fail the student can choose to proceed straight to a reassessment without submitting an acceptable version, but where the mark is between 30 and 38 the student should be informed that it may be in their best interests to submit an acceptable version so that the module can be condoned in the event that they fail the reassessment.

4	<p>First offence of plagiarism or collusion.</p> <p>First offence of unpermitted use of generative artificial intelligence tools in the production of an assignment.</p> <p>Penalty for major offence.</p> <p>(in taught and research degrees apart from research degree thesis or published work).</p>	<p>The issue of a written warning for academic misconduct plus allocation of a mark of zero for the assessment unit in question and with the normal consequences, if any, for reassessment.</p>
5	<p>Second offence of plagiarism or collusion.</p> <p>Second offence of unpermitted use of generative artificial intelligence tools in the production of an assignment.</p> <p>Penalty for minor offence</p> <p>(in taught and research degrees apart from research degree thesis or published work).</p>	<p>The issue of a written warning for academic misconduct plus allocation of a mark of zero for the assessment unit in question and with the normal consequences, if any, for reassessment.</p>
6	<p>Second offence of plagiarism or collusion.</p> <p>Second offence of unpermitted use of generative artificial intelligence tools in the production of an assignment.</p> <p>Penalty for major offence</p> <p>(in taught and research degrees apart from research degree thesis or published work).</p>	<p>The issue of a written warning for academic misconduct plus allocation of a mark of zero for the module in question and with the normal consequences, if any, for reassessment. This means that all the assessment components for the module will be set to zero and if reassessment is allowed the student will have to take reassessment of all the module components again. For modules of 30 credits or more, where allocating a mark of zero for all assessment components would be disproportionate or it is not feasible to redo some of the assessment components (e.g. practical's), the Academic Conduct Officer will ask the Student Conduct Manager to consult with one of the Chairs of the Academic Misconduct Committee to decide on an appropriate penalty.</p>
7	<p>Third and subsequent offences of plagiarism or collusion</p> <p>Third offence of unpermitted use of generative artificial</p>	<p>Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.</p>

	intelligence tools in the production of an assignment. (in taught and research degrees apart from research degree thesis or published work).	
8	Major plagiarism in a research degree thesis or published work.  Unpermitted use of generative artificial intelligence tools in the production of the research degree thesis or published work.	Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
9	Contract cheating.	Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
10	Writing part of, or all, of another student's assignment.	Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
11	Falsification of data or sources.	Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
12	Falsification of official documents e.g. medical notes or signatures where these have been used to gain academic benefit.	Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
13	First offence of misconduct in an open book assessment, class test or a flexible class test	The issue of a written warning for academic misconduct plus allocation of a mark of zero for the assessment unit in question and with the normal consequences, if any, for reassessment.
14	Second offence of misconduct in an open book assessment, class test or a flexible class test.	A mark of 0 for the module (not just the examination) with the normal consequences, if any, for reassessment and with any reassessment being for credit purposes only. This means that all the assessment components will be set to 0 and the student will have to complete reassessment of all the module assessments again. Should the student pass, they will be awarded the credit but will receive a mark of 0. This 0 mark will be used in the degree calculation and so could impact on the class of degree

		awarded. The 0 mark will also appear on the student's transcript.
15	Third and subsequent offences of misconduct in an open book assessment, class test or a flexible class test.	Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
16	First offence of examination misconduct (where student has no previous record of academic misconduct on file) where the student had unauthorised material in their possession.	A mark of 0 for the module (not just the examination) with the normal consequences, if any, for reassessment and with any reassessment being for credit purposes only. This means that all the assessment components will be set to 0 and the student will have to complete reassessment of all the module assessments again. Should the student pass, they will be awarded the credit but will receive a mark of 0. This 0 mark will be used in the degree calculation and so could impact on the class of degree awarded. The 0 mark will also appear on the student's transcript.
17	A student allowing someone to impersonate them during an examination or test.	Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
18	Impersonating another student in an examination or test.	Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
19	Second and subsequent offences of examination misconduct.	Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
20	Gaining access to assessment details e.g. examination paper, prior to the release of the assessment details.	Termination of studies with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
21	Research offence.	Case by case basis up to termination of studies or retraction of the degree depending on the severity of the breach with a bar on any future enrolment with the University.
22	Any serious offence of academic misconduct which is found to be proven after the credit/award	Retrospective removal of credit and/or award, subject to confirmation by the

	has been awarded / approved by a University Examination Board.	Senate of the University and a bar on any future enrolment with the University,
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## 15. Recording of an offence

- 15.1 All proven academic misconduct offences including warnings will be recorded on a student's record. The outcome will be communicated to the student, and notified to the School Academic Conduct Officer, the relevant Head(s) of School, the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Manager, and other relevant staff as required to administer and support the student's academic progress.
- 15.2 All proven academic misconduct offences (including those with accepted exceptional circumstances) will remain part of the student's central record.
- 15.3 Offences will be kept on file for those students who proceed from the Foundation Year to an undergraduate programme of study and for students who repeat a year of study. Offences that are on file for those undergraduate students who continue studying at Keele on a postgraduate programme will not be treated as previous offences in relation to the new programme but will be disclosed in response to requests for information if the student has declared the offence to any outside body e.g. potential employer, professional body.
- 15.4 For students subject to fitness to practise procedures, the offence will be disclosed to the relevant Head of School for consideration. Where a case is referred to the School Health and Conduct Committee and/or Fitness to Practise Committee the academic misconduct investigation paperwork and details of the outcome will be shared so that the Committee can consider the nature of the offence and decide any professional consequences. Neither Committee has the power to amend the penalty imposed by the Academic Conduct Officer/Committee.
- 15.5 Where relevant the professional body will be informed.
- 15.6 Unproven cases will not be kept on the student's record or disclosed to the Academic Misconduct Committee if there are any further allegations of academic misconduct.

## 16. Appeals

- 16.1 A student has the right to appeal to the Academic Misconduct Committee against the decision of an Academic Conduct Officer. Appeals can be made only on one or both of the following grounds:
- (i) procedural irregularity in the conduct of the original investigations of the Academic Conduct Officer;
  - (ii) exceptional circumstances, providing that these circumstances can be substantiated and there is a valid reason why these were not made known at the time when the penalty was imposed.
- 16.2 A student can appeal the decision of the Academic Misconduct Committee (to the Academic Misconduct Appeals Committee), unless the Academic Misconduct Committee's decision was on an appeal against the decision of an Academic Conduct Officer. The membership of the Academic Misconduct Appeals Committee

must be different to the original committee membership when the appeal is heard. Appeals can only be made on one or both of the following grounds:

- (i) procedural irregularity prior to or in the conduct of the Committee meeting;
  - (ii) there is new evidence that can be substantiated, including exceptional circumstances, which were not known at the time and may have affected the outcome had it been known to the Committee and that there is a valid reason for not making it known at the time.
- 16.3 Appeals must be sent to the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Manager within 10 calendar days of the date on the letter informing the student of the outcome.
- 16.4 Appeals will be considered in the first instance by the Head of Academic Quality and Student Conduct and one of the members of the Academic Misconduct Committee (or nominee). This is called the sifting stage of the appeals process. It consists of an initial assessment of readily available documentation, to include the student submission, information on SCIMS, and the paperwork from the case considered by either the Academic Conduct Officer or the Academic Misconduct Committee.
- 16.5 If it is clear that a case for consideration has not been established including a valid reason as to why the student did not use the exceptional circumstances process if they ask for exceptional circumstances to be taken into account, the case may be rejected.

## **17. Grievances**

- 17.1 Following exhaustion of the appeals procedure, a student may submit a grievance to the University Council under the terms provided for by Statute 17(22). Grievances must be submitted within 14 calendar days of the letter informing the student of the outcome of the appeal and must be made in writing to the Secretary to Council.
- 17.2 Grievances can only be made on one or both of the following grounds:
- (a) procedural irregularity in the conduct of the case;
  - (b) there is new evidence that can be substantiated, including exceptional circumstances, which was not known at the time, and may have affected the outcome had it been known to the Committee and that there is a valid reason for not making it known at the time.

## **18. Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

- 18.1 Grievances to Council represent the completion of the University's internal procedures. When the process is exhausted and the student has been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter, students who remain dissatisfied may contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education, which provides an independent review of student complaints.

## **ANNEX A**

### **Definition of minor and major plagiarism/collusion**

#### **Poor Academic Practice**

Poor academic practice may be characterised by:

- Poor citation where there is evidence that the student does not understand the rules of academic writing (e.g. year 1 student in the first semester);
- The extent of the copied material/text is so small that it does not justify a penalty;
- Short blocks of material or copied text which is referenced in the bibliography but is not properly cited.

#### **Minor offences of plagiarism**

A minor offence will be committed when the copied material/text does not represent a significant proportion of the work and/or is not central to the piece of work.

Minor offences of plagiarism may be characterised by:

- Short blocks of material or copied text expressing ideas or concepts taken from the work of others without appropriate acknowledgment of the source;
- Short blocks of material or copied text that is cited but is not in quotation marks;
- Short blocks of material or copied text where there are minor linguistic changes and presented as the student's own words, with or without citation;
- Short blocks of copied code or other experimental material without appropriate citation;
- Extensive or numerous blocks of material or copied text which is referenced in the bibliography but is not properly cited.

A short block of text may be as small as two continuing lines.

#### **Major offences of plagiarism**

A major offence will be committed when the copied material/text represents a significant proportion of the work and/or is central to the piece of work.

Major offences of plagiarism may be characterised by:

- Extensive or numerous blocks of material or copied text expressing ideas or concepts taken from the work of others without appropriate acknowledgment of the source;
- Extensive or numerous blocks of material or copied text that is cited but is not in quotation marks;
- Extensive or numerous blocks of material or copied text where there are minor linguistic changes and presented as the student's own words, with or without citation;
- Extensive or numerous blocks of copied code or other experimental material without appropriate citation;
- Substantial use of ideas and arguments of a source or sources which may or may not appear in the references or bibliography, where the context is such that it is presented as the student's own ideas;

- Submission of the same piece of work for assessment in whole or in large part, for more than one assessment without acknowledgement of the source;
- A second instance of giving another student a copy of all or part of one's own work which results in poor academic practice or academic misconduct.

Extensive blocks of text may be as small as several continuing lines.

### **Minor offences of collusion**

Minor offences of collusion in work submitted for an assessment that has been made known to be individual work may be characterised by:

- Short blocks of shared text or material without acknowledgement;
- Multiple shared text fragments;
- Shared frameworks or outlines;
- Short blocks of copied code or other experimental material.

### **Major offences of collusion**

Major offences of collusion in work submitted for an assessment that has been made known to be individual work may be characterised by:

- Extensive or numerous blocks of shared text (including copied text subjected to minor linguistic changes);
- Extensive or numerous blocks of copied code or other experimental material;
- Similar bibliographies.