Profess for Investigating Alleged Ethics Offences at School Level (School Student Project Ethics Committees)

The following point has been added to Regulation 8 General Regulations for University Examinations and Assessments Section 11 Conduct with regard to dissertation, projects, essays and other like in course assessments

11.5 Student projects which involve the participation of human subjects must not be undertaken without the prior approval of a School Student Project Ethics Committee (or another Ethics Committee recognised for this purpose by the relevant School).

When school modules have systems in place to deal with failures to comply with specific research ethics requirements and expectations, then any failure to comply with the specific research ethics requirements set can be dealt with as part of failing to comply with module requirements.

An ethics offence takes place if the student's project requires but has no prior School ethics approval or if the project deviates substantially from what was approved by the School Student Project Ethics Committee (or equivalent).

The offence is minor if:-

(a) the work carried out would (or would with minor amendments) have been approved by the School had it been submitted for review and

(b) the work carried out did not involve any of the following: accessing confidential data without valid consent, deceiving participants, observing them unawares, the study of vulnerable subjects, significant risk of harm to any person, or unlawful behaviour on the part of the student concerned.

All other offences are considered major.

In Schools where there are professional disciplines what constitutes a minor or major offence might be influenced by the governing professional bodies for that School, and such Schools may need to take this into consideration.

School Student Project Ethics Committees (S-SPECs) will themselves be responsible for handling alleged minor offences\(^1\)\(^2\). S-SPECs will also be responsible for deciding whether any particular case should be referred to the Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP). Only major offences or repeat minor offences should be referred to the AMP.

Some student behaviour constitutes both an ethics offence (as defined above) AND is a breach of the regulations on student discipline (regulations 20 and 21, for example). In such cases the University may decide to take action on both grounds simultaneously or sequentially and penalties for both may be applied. An example of this would be where a student, in the course of undertaking a project, subjects others to unacceptable level so harm or risk and in so doing breaches Health and Safety rules.

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\(^1\) Informed by University guidelines on procedures and penalties
\(^2\) The range of penalties and the School’s position should be reflected in the School Handbook and other relevant documentation
\(^3\) Mark sheets may need to be revised to include ethics
FLOW CHART OUTLINING THE PROCESS FOR INVESTIGATING ALLEGED ETHICS OFFENCES AT SCHOOL LEVEL

Alleged offence is referred to the S-SPEC Chair

Chair of S-SPEC in consultation with S-SPEC members determines

a) If alleged offence warrants penalties or alleged offence is mistaken and can be dismissed and

b) If the offence warrants penalties whether is considered to be a minor or major offence

No Offence

Major Offence

Minor Offence

No further action required

Refer to Lynn Knight, Student Conduct Manager who, if satisfied that there is a case for investigation, shall inform the student of the nature of the allegation and of the arrangements by the Academic Misconduct Panel constituted under regulation 8.12.3

Chair of S-SPEC shall inform the student that an offence has been committed and of the subsequent process and potential penalties

Chair of S-SPEC in conjunction with S-SPEC members will determine the level of penalty for the offence (from the range of penalties as indicated in the School Handbook)

Chair of S-SPEC to inform student (and others as appropriate) of penalty imposed

Examples of the range of penalties that could be imposed for minor offences\(^4\)

- Cap in marks for the relevant module
- 10% reduction in marks for the relevant module
- Resit of module

\(^4\) Minimum range of penalties that can be imposed