HE Academic Misconduct Procedure

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Contents

1. Purpose

1.1. This Procedure relate to the provision of higher education programmes delivered at the College. Students undertaking a programme of study awarded by Sheffield Hallam University at TSCG may access the University regulation here:

https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/conduct_discipline/

1.2. Any student who does not follow accepted academic practice in their assessed work is considered to have committed academic misconduct.

1.3. Academic Misconduct can take one or more of the following forms:

- Plagiarism
- Collusion
- Falsification of data
- Dishonest practice and impersonation of others
- Cheating
- Breaching examination rules and regulations.
- Misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

1.4. Processes have been established to deal with reported cases of academic misconduct consistently. These processes include formal reports of infringements of the examination rules from invigilators and the use of detection software such as Turnitin®.

1.5. All allegations of academic misconduct will be investigated by an Academic Misconduct Investigator (AMI). The AMI will be an employee of TSCG whose role it will be to lead the investigation into suspected academic misconduct who is independent of the case.

1.6. In addition to this Procedure, students on professional courses may also be subject to Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body policies and procedures. Where this is the case, these will be specified in individual course documentation.

2. Scope

This Procedure is made for the use of employees and students of Trafford and Stockport College, comprising of Trafford College, Stockport College, Cheadle College and Marple Sixth Form. For convenience, and unless otherwise indicated the group of colleges is referred to as ‘we’, ‘our’ or ‘the College’. ‘You’ and ‘your’ refer to all students of Trafford and Stockport College.

3. Academic Misconduct Categories

3.1 A student (singly or in conjunction with others) who is considered to have contravened acceptable academic practice will be penalised with the severity of the penalty determined by whether they are deemed to have committed any of the following:

- Minor academic misconduct
- Major academic misconduct
- Gross academic misconduct

Appendix Table 1 outlines the academic misconduct categories and the sanctions that would normally be applied as well as outline the processes for dealing with each category. As the penalty for academic misconduct may result in a direct and significant impact on a student's ability to proceed with their studies, the burden of proof rests with TSCG for each category of academic misconduct.

3.2 The following guidance will enable lecturers to judge which category best describes any suspected misconduct.

Minor Academic Misconduct

- Less than 25% of the assessed work was involved or the misconduct occurred in a part of the work of lesser importance in relation to the assessment marking criteria
- The misconduct arose solely from poorly applied citation conventions, including the absence or incorrect use of quotation marks where other's words are reproduced, as opposed to the inclusion of unattributed material
- The misconduct occurred early in the student's HE studies or there is another well-founded reason to suppose that the student did not understand academic conventions
- There is no indication that the student had intent to gain unfair advantage
- There is no prior record of the student having committed any category of academic misconduct.

Major Academic Misconduct

As minor academic misconduct but more serious infraction demonstrated by:

- Between 25% and 50% of the assessed work was involved
- The misconduct arose from the inclusion of unattributed material, as opposed, solely, to the misuse of citation conventions
- There is no reasonable reason to suppose that the student did not understand academic conventions and the need to declare where work is substantially that of another (be it published or from other sources including friend, family, employer or another student)
- There is a record of the student having previously committed minor academic misconduct.

Gross Academic Misconduct

As major academic misconduct but more serious infraction demonstrated by:

- More than 50% of the submitted work was involved
- The misconduct occurred in an important part of the work, in relation to the assessment marking criteria
- There is a reasonable indication that the student sought to gain an unfair advantage
- There is a prior record of the student having previously committed major academic misconduct.

4. Forms of Academic Misconduct

The forms of academic misconduct that fall within the purview of this Procedure include, but are not limited to:

Plagiarism: the inclusion of unattributed writing or paraphrasing from someone else's work into your own. Plagiarism can take many forms, such as complete plagiarism, partial plagiarism and self-plagiarism or duplication.

Collusion: where two or more students have collaborated to produce a piece of work to be submitted (in whole or in part) for assessment, and this is presented as the work of one student alone.

Falsification of Data: where a student presents data based on experimental/experiential work which the student has invented or obtained by unfair methods to gain an unfair advantage.

Dishonest Practice and Impersonation: Covers any form of dishonest practice not specifically identified above and the act of a student submitting someone else's work claiming it to be their own.

Cheating: any attempt by a student to gain an unfair advantage in an assessment by dishonest means. This includes, but is not limited to;

- Communicating or attempting to communicate with other students in an examination
- Taking unauthorised material or equipment into an examination room including electronic storage devices (unless permitted in the unit descriptor)
- Obtaining a copy of an examination paper prior to formal assessment
- Reading/copying from another student's examination script
- Claiming to require concession arrangements or falsifying evidence of mitigating circumstances.

Misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI): where a student has relied on AI to complete an assessment such that the attainment demonstrated does not accurately reflect their own work. This may include:

- Copying or paraphrasing whole responses or sections of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the students own
- Using AI to complete parts of an assessment which is then not a reflection of the students own work
- When AI tools have been used as a source of information, failing to acknowledge the use of such tools including incomplete or poor acknowledgement
- Submission of work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies

5. Poor Academic Practice

5.1 Academic misconduct is distinct from poor academic practice where an unacceptable proportion of the assessed work is based directly on the work of others, albeit with correct citation and attribution.

5.2 Lecturers and markers should ensure that the reproduction of others' words is not rewarded and should impose a penalty by adjusting marks accordingly.

5.3 The penalty should take into account the extent to which the marking scheme requires independent description and application of originality. The work may be awarded zero marks in severe occurrences of poor academic practice at the discretion of the lecturer.

5.4 Cases of poor academic practice do not need to be reported unless the lecturer or marking member of staff is compelled to award a Fail grade.

5.5 In those cases, the student will be asked to attend a meeting with their Course Leader to discuss development of academic skills and whether any additional support is required.

5.6 Where a student wishes to appeal against a poor academic practice outcome, they should submit their appeal to the TSCG Deputy Principal.

6. Academic Misconduct Penalties

The following outlines the sanctions normally attributed to each category of Misconduct

6.1 Minor Academic Misconduct:

- A reduction in grade in line with the proportion of the assessment affected taking into account the importance of the parts affected in relation to assessment marking criteria. Maximum penalty is a Fail grade for the work with a written warning and a note on the student record.

6.2 Major Academic Misconduct

- A Fail grade for the module(s) affected with opportunity to be reassessed with eligibility to be determined by the Assessment Board. A written warning and a note on the student record.

6.3 Gross Academic Misconduct

- Failure of module with no opportunity to be reassessed. A recommendation that the failed module should impact on progression or award entitlement with the opportunity to restudy the unit, depending on eligibility, to be determined by the Assessment Board.

- Failure of module with no reassessment and recommendation to the Assessment Board that the failed module should impact on any progression or award entitlement, with no opportunity to restudy that or alternative module. A note on the student record.

- Failure of all modules studied in the academic year with no opportunity for reassessment and a recommendation to the Assessment Board that either:

    - An opportunity to restudy in the following academic year is acceptable; or,
    - The student is withdrawn from the programme with no opportunity to re- enrol for at least twelve months has passed; or,
    - The student is withdrawn from the programme permanently, and
    - A note is made on the student record.

7. Cheating During Examination

The minimum penalty for cheating in time constrained assessments is the failure of all units taken in the academic year, withdrawal from the programme and suspension from studies for a minimum period of twelve months, after which restudy of failed modules may be permitted.

8. Notification of Suspected Academic Misconduct

8.1 Notification of alleged misconduct of any category should be made to the Head of HigherEducation Registry, Standards and Compliance in the first instance without undue delay.

Notification of suspected academic misconduct will normally be received from the colleagues marking the student's work, an internal verifier, or an external examiner.

8.2 Colleagues raising suspicions are responsible for setting out clearly the nature of their suspicions together with examples form the student's work highlighting how and where the misconduct has taken place.

8.3 If an invigilator suspects a student of misconduct during an examination, the invigilator will:

- Annotate the script informing the student of their suspicion
- Confiscate any relevant evidence (e.g. any unauthorised materials) and give the student a receipt
- Permit the student to continue at this point
- If there are grounds to suspect the student is continuing to breach the assessment regulations, (s)he will be expelled from the room, ensuring the minimum amount of inconvenience and disruption to other students.

Following the examination, the invigilator will submit a report to the Head of Higher Education Registry, Standards and Compliance. The report should be accompanied by all evidence gathered. Copies of the report and evidence will be shared with the relevant Head of Studies from the relevant department.

8.4 Upon receipt of a notification of suspected academic misconduct, the Head of Higher Education Registry, Standards and Compliance will appoint an Academic Misconduct Investigator (AMI). The AMI will be an employee whose responsibility it is to investigate, independently, all academic misconduct allegations.

8.5 The AMI will review the notification and associated evidence and establish if the student has a case to answer. The AMI will be guided on the principle that it is TSCG's responsibility to establish proof of misconduct based on the balance of probabilities.

8.6 If it is decided that the student has no case to answer, then no further action will be taken and no record retained on the student's file.

8.7 Allegations will normally be considered at one or two separate stages. Stage 1 is for minor and major misconduct and Stage 2 is for gross academic misconduct.

9. Academic Misconduct: Stage 1: Minor and Major Academic Misconduct

9.1 Having arrived at the decision that there is a case to answer, the AMI will invite the student to an Academic Conduct Hearing (ACH) to explain the nature of the allegation and to allow the student to explain events and establish a detailed account of what occurred.

9.2 The ACH includes but is not limited to; the relevant Higher Education Head of Studies (Chair), the employee who made the initial notification of suspected misconduct, the AMI, a member of the Higher Education teaching staff independent of the case and an administrator/secretary.

9.3 Following the ACH and after any further investigation deemed to be appropriate, the Chair can reach any of the decisions described under 'Minor Academic Misconduct' and 'Major Academic Misconduct'. The ACH may also decide to take no further action.

9.4 A student who believes a penalty awarded at Stage 1 is too severe can request that the decision is reviewed at Stage 2.

10. Academic Misconduct: Stage 2: Gross Academic Misconduct

10.1 Having established via the processes described in section 6 that there is a case of Gross Academic Misconduct to hear, the AMI will invite the student to an Academic Conduct Panel meeting (ACP).

10.2 The ACP will typically include but is not limited to: Head of Higher Education and Skills (Chair), Head of Studies, the employee who made the initial notification of suspected academic misconduct, the AMI and 2 members of the Higher Education teaching team.

10.3 Any employees involved with hearings as at Stage 1 will not attend the ACP. These staff may be called to give evidence by the Chair of the ACP. The same will apply under the circumstances described at paragraph 9.4.

10.4 Following the ACP and after any further investigation deemed to be appropriate, the Chair can reach any of the decisions described under 'Gross Academic Misconduct'. The ACP may also decide to take no further action.

10.5 Students suspected to be cheating in time constrained assessments constitutes gross academic misconduct and the case will be considered at an ACP taking account of the sanction described at section 7.

11. Historic Allegations of Academic Misconduct

11.1 Notifications of suspected academic misconduct can be received after work has been formally assessed and/or after an award has been conferred. These will be subject to the same investigative procedures outlined above and may result in a reconsideration of an award outcome decision previously taken.

11.2 Notifications of suspected academic misconduct by students who have been withdrawn or taken a break in study will be investigated using the same procedures outlined above. This is in order to have an agreed outcome on the student's record ahead of any return to study. These processes may also result in a reconsideration of an award outcome decision previously taken.

12. Appeals

12.1 Students have the right to appeal a decision of the ACP. Where this happens, they will be dealt with as at Stage 3 of the HE Academic Appeals Procedure.

12.2. An appeal must be received by the Deputy Principal within **10 working days** of the notification of the panel's decision to the student.

Category of Misconduct	Burden and Standard of Proof	Associated Normal Penalty	Dealt With By
Minor academic misconduct	The College to establish proof on the **balance of probabilities**	Possibility of a fail grade for the piece of work and a written warning.	Module Tutor under the advice of the nominated Academic Misconduct Investigator and an Academic Conduct Hearing (ACH)
Major academic misconduct	The College to establish proof on the **balance of probabilities**	Fail grade for the module, with opportunity to be reassessed	Module Leader in consultation with the Academic Misconduct Investigator and an Academic Conduct Hearing
Gross academic misconduct	The College to establish proof **on the balance of probabilities**	Ranges from failure of module with no entitlement to reassessment through to failure of all modules in the year and withdrawal	Module Leader, Principal Academic Misconduct Investigator and Academic Conduct Panel

12.3. Where an appeal is not upheld, the student will be provided with a 'completion of procedures' letter and details of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Students in Higher Education (OIA).

Appendix Table 1.

Academic Misconduct Categories and Associated Arrangements

Academic Misconduct Penalties

The following outlines the sanctions normally attributed to each category of Misconduct