

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT QA 23: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND MISCONDUCT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This policy and procedure applies to all students of the University and therefore all taught programmes and modules offered at Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels. It is also applicable to students undertaking an Arden University programme through a collaborative or partnership provider.

1. The aim of this policy is to ensure that:
  - i. Cases of suspected academic misconduct are dealt with openly and fairly.
  - ii. Appropriate penalties and sanctions are imposed for proven cases of academic misconduct.
  - iii. Academic Integrity is promoted across the University and issues relating to this are responded to appropriately to minimise the risk of academic misconduct.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

2. Academic integrity is about fairness and honesty in the assessment process and mastering the art of scholarship. Scholarship involves researching, understanding and building upon the works of others and requires that students give credit where it is due and acknowledge the contributions of others to their own intellectual efforts. Where a student does not act with Academic Integrity, their work may demonstrate poor academic practice, or it may represent academic misconduct.

### **ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

3. Academic Misconduct is any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community.
4. Academic Misconduct includes cheating, attempts to cheat, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, falsifying data and contract cheating. It is wrong and unacceptable, not least because it is dishonest, and it undermines the value of the qualification that students are pursuing.
5. Examples of academic misconduct are provided below. This list of examples is not exhaustive and does not limit the general nature of the definition of academic misconduct. Other actions may fall within the general definition of academic misconduct.
  - i. Infringements of examination regulations, for example, but not limited to; the introduction of prohibited material into the examination; copying from or any communication with any other person during the examination that has not been

- authorised by an invigilator, the impersonation of an examination candidate or allowing oneself to be impersonated.
- ii. Plagiarism, which is the use without proper acknowledgement of another person's words and presenting it in an assessment as if they were one's own. Plagiarism includes copying from another student, copying from published work (including online learning materials, lecturer notes, books, internet sites, journal articles, case studies, computer code etc.).
  - iii. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of previously submitted work from other modules or programmes (not limited to Arden) and any other similar practice, including the reuse and submission of the same piece of work for two or more different purposes.
  - iv. Collusion, which includes work that is undertaken collaboratively by two or more people and is submitted as if it were the work of a single person; the submission of one student's work as if it were the work of another student; where a student makes their work available to another student to copy; where a student copies another's work with or without the other person's knowledge. It should be noted that in collusion cases, both or all parties can be considered to be at fault even if the collusion takes place without the knowledge of the original author of the work. It is distinct from contract cheating for the purpose of this policy as collusion does not depend on a fee being paid for the work.
  - v. Contracting, paid or otherwise, of others to produce the work (ghost writing). This includes the use of known essay writing services and/or other agencies and the use of any other party in the production of some, or all of the work.
  - vi. Falsifying data, including but not limited to, fabricated authorisation letters, making false claims to have carried out research, observations, surveys, interviews or other forms of data collection and analysis.

## **OFFENCE OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

6. A student is guilty of academic misconduct if acting alone or with other(s) gains or attempts to gain credit or advantage in an assessment by improper means:
  - i. A student commits the offence of academic misconduct, gaining advantage or credit or attempting to gain advantage or credit for him/herself or another.
  - ii. The student's intent in committing the actions which amount to academic misconduct is immaterial and will not be considered by the Committee when determining whether the student is guilty of academic misconduct.
  - iii. The student's intent in committing the actions which amount to academic misconduct will if relevant be considered by the Committee in determining appropriate penalty or action.
7. Cases of academic misconduct are treated extremely seriously. Students found guilty of committing an academic misconduct offence will be penalised. Penalties are detailed in Section 27.

## **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ASSESSMENT MISCONDUCT**

8. Students are required to submit their assignments electronically via the University's Virtual Learning Environment. It is Arden University's policy to systematically scan all assessment submissions received in this way by use of the Turnitin plagiarism detection system. There is no set acceptable Turnitin score; work with lower Turnitin scores may still be referred if there is any doubt over the originality of the work. In addition, markers and examiners are expected to be vigilant in detecting academic misconduct in assessment.
9. For programmes delivered in languages other than English, alternative plagiarism detection software or systems may be used.
10. Students have the ability to submit a draft of their work to Turnitin in advance of the assessment deadline and are strongly encouraged to use this function developmentally before making their final submission.
11. An internal marker, external examiner, University staff or any other individual involved in the assessment of students who suspects, during or after the assessment and marking process, including following the ratification of grades and/or prior or following the award of a qualification, that a student has committed academic misconduct must report this using the UP field on the marking screen (if using isystem) or refer the suspicion to the Head of Quality and provide details of the evidence that gave rise to this suspicion.
12. In cases of suspected contract cheating, supporting evidence could include:
  - meta-data captured from within the submitted document (for example, the properties of a Word document may identify the author as being different from the student)
  - samples of the student's normal writing style
  - evidence of the submission to an essay mill
  - notes from a viva voce examination conducted as part of the evidence collection process (see section 17)

In the case that a marker reports an allegation of UP as above, the student's work in question must nonetheless be marked and awarded a grade on its own merit taking into account any lack of originality and produce feedback that takes account of the work in its entirety, irrespective of the allegation. This grade and feedback would stand in the case that a student is cleared of academic misconduct.

13. In the case that markers assessing the first two modules of a programme, or modules submitted in the student's first round of assessments, identify cases of poor references where there is no evidence of intentional academic misconduct, this will be noted in the feedback as an informal warning to students. These cases will be treated developmentally and need not be reported for further investigation.

14. Invigilators suspecting academic misconduct in examinations will act in accordance with the relevant examination regulations and will make a report of the allegation in the invigilator's report and append any supporting evidence to their report.
15. Allegations raised during the marking stage will be initially reviewed by an Academic Integrity Officer to determine whether a formal allegation will be made against a student.

#### **VIVA VOCE MEETINGS**

16. Where there are concerns regarding the authenticity of work such as suspected use of a third-party in the production of the assessment (e.g., ghost writing or use of essay mills) or falsification of data, the student may be asked to attend a viva voce meeting to demonstrate their authorship.
17. The date and time of the Viva Voce meeting will be provided along with full instructions for attendance and details of what they may expect as part of the process. The student may be accompanied by a friend, relative or student representative. If an agreeable date for the meeting cannot be arranged with the student within 10 working days, or if the student fails to attend without good cause or prior notification, the case will be referred to the Committee of Enquiry and a decision may be made based on the evidence provided.
18. The Viva Voce meeting will be conducted by an academic subject expert (normally the person raising the concern) and one other academic staff member independent from the allegation who will act as chair. The chair should ensure that the viva is conducted in a collegiate manner and that the student is treated fairly. During the meeting, students will be given the opportunity to explain their work and questions may be posed in respect of sources, ideas and theories presented within the work. Minutes of the meeting will be taken by the Quality nominee.
19. The Viva Voce meeting is not the point at which the outcome of the investigation is decided but will be used to gather evidence to present as part of any formal allegation and investigation by the Committee of Enquiry. Once the meeting is concluded, if concerns remain, a formal allegation will be made and referred to the Committee of Enquiry. The student will be issued with further instructions as detailed within section 22.

#### **COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY**

20. All instances of alleged academic misconduct will be collated by a nominee of the Quality team who will be responsible for convening a Committee of Enquiry to hear and investigate the allegations and to determine any penalties to be applied. The Committee of Enquiry will normally comprise the Quality nominee, who will act as secretary and take minutes of the proceedings, and two academic staff members including an Academic Integrity Officer, who will act as Chair. Where deemed

appropriate, an independent person may be appointed as an additional member of the Committee.

21. Students will be issued with individual letters detailing the nature of the allegation being made against them and inviting them to provide a formal response either in writing, by telephone or in person to the Committee of Enquiry. A link to the Academic misconduct procedure will be included in the email. Letters will normally be issued at least 7 days in advance of the scheduled meeting of the Committee of Enquiry.
22. Students wishing to attend the Committee of Enquiry in person may be accompanied by a friend, adviser or representative who may speak on their behalf. They cannot be accompanied by a professional (e.g. solicitor or barrister) acting on their behalf in a professional capacity.
23. The student will be required to inform the Quality Team via [upresponses@arden.ac.uk](mailto:upresponses@arden.ac.uk) whether they intend to make a verbal response or provide a written response to the allegation or not. Students who are being accompanied by a friend, adviser or representative must inform the Quality nominee of the name of the person in writing in advance of the meeting. Every reasonable attempt will be made to obtain a response from the student and the Committee of Enquiry will not normally hear a case for which no acknowledgement of the allegation has been received from the student, or without the student being fully informed that their case will be heard without their response. If, however, a student does not attend the meeting of the Committee of Enquiry, having previously indicated that they would attend, and providing all reasonable attempts have been made to contact the student, the meeting shall proceed in their absence.

Cases of collusion will normally be heard separately, however students who choose to attend the Committee of Enquiry meeting may request that their case be heard jointly.

24. The terms of reference of the Committee of Enquiry are:
  - i. To consider the evidence on which the allegation of academic misconduct is based;
  - ii. To determine whether the allegation has been substantiated;
  - iii. Where a case has been substantiated, to determine the penalty or action to be imposed;
  - iv. To record observations and outcomes that may be used to inform staff training, assessment design, process and practice or any other outcome that would benefit from further investigation and reporting.
25. The following procedures apply to meetings of the Committee of Enquiry:
  - i. The Chair or other member of the Committee will present the case against the student and the evidence on which the case is based.
  - ii. If the student is in attendance, in person or by telephone, the Committee may question the student during the presentation of evidence.
  - iii. Once the presentation of evidence is complete, all persons, excluding the Committee members, shall withdraw, and the committee shall consider whether the allegation has been substantiated.

- iv. If the Committee finds that the case has been substantiated, it shall then consider the penalty or action to be imposed.
- v. If the Committee finds that the case is not substantiated but the Committee finds that the infraction goes beyond poor references as outlined in paragraph 14, then the Committee can make a finding of poor academic practice and consider imposition of an action.

## **ACTIONS AND PENALTIES**

### **26. Actions and penalties available to the Committee of Enquiry are:**

- i. Actions available to the Committee:
  - UPA: Initial warning letter for poor academic practice – grade stands.
- ii. Penalties available to the Committee for confirmed cases of academic misconduct:
  - UPB: Formal warning – loss of marks for the work submitted with re-sits capped at the minimum pass grade. Recommended for first substantive offences. Students will be required to resubmit based on a new assessment question for taught modules. For dissertations/research projects, students may be required to select a new research topic and will be notified of this within the outcome letter.
  - UPC: Final warning - loss of marks for the work submitted with re-sits capped at the minimum pass grade. Recommended for students who have received a UPB in a previous assessment period or for first offences due to the severity of which a UPB is deemed inappropriate. Students will be required to resubmit based on a new assessment question for taught modules. For dissertations/research projects, students will be required to select a new research topic, particularly in cases of falsified data.
  - UPD: Exclusion from programme. Loss of marks for the work submitted. Recommended for students who have received a UPC in a previous assessment period or for serious first offences due to the severity of which a UPB or UPC are deemed inappropriate. Students excluded as a result of academic misconduct will not be considered for readmission to a University programme.
- iii. Claims of exceptional mitigating circumstances cannot normally override an Academic misconduct penalty or action and cannot lead to a lower penalty or action.

### **27. Following the Committee of Enquiry, the following actions will be undertaken:**

- i. A letter will be issued to students notifying them of the outcome of the Committee of Enquiry and informing them of any penalty or action that has been imposed, if applicable.

- ii. The Quality nominee will record such outcomes on the student's record and any cancellation of grade will also be recorded.
- iii. The outcomes of the Committee of Enquiry will be presented to the next meeting of the Subject Assessment Board, where these outcomes will be formally received and ratified.
- iv. Where the penalty determined by the Committee of Enquiry is exclusion, the student will be presented to the Progression and Award Board for formal withdrawal. Grades and/or awards achieved prior to the exclusion will normally stand unless there is clear and compelling evidence to demonstrate that credits should be removed. In such cases, the University reserves the right to retrospectively review previously ratified work.
- v. The decision of the Committee of Enquiry is final and there shall be no further discussion of the details of the case with the student following the Committee of Enquiry meeting. The student does, however, have the right of appeal as detailed in Section 29.
- vi. Students that are issued with a formal or final warning (UPB or UPC) must complete the university's ASSIST – module. Access to all active modules may be suspended until ASSIST has been successfully completed.
- vii. Allegations of academic misconduct which involve fraud or a serious breach of examination security and implicate the Head of Centre or senior management will be reported to the Academic Registrar and will be investigated accordingly.
- viii. Confirmed cases of Academic misconduct may be reported to professional bodies where applicable.

## **APPEALS**

- 28.** Students whose allegation of academic misconduct has been substantiated have the right to appeal against the decision of a Committee of Enquiry. Student appeals must be made in writing and in accordance with the QA 24 Academic Appeals policy.

## **Outcomes**

- During the investigation of academic misconduct allegations, issues and observations may arise that would benefit from further investigation or action. These may impact on future academic practice, staff development or University processes and procedures.
- Key themes will be discussed during the committee and summarised by the secretary. The AIO will provide a report to the next available Course Committee and action required at a programme level will be generated and captured within the programme team's Annual Rolling Action Plan.
- An overarching report with a summary of outcomes and key themes arising will be presented to the Learning and Teaching Committee on a quarterly basis and will form part of the annual report to Academic Board.