



# Academic Misconduct Investigation Procedures

## Purpose of Procedure

This document sets out the University's procedures for dealing with suspected cases of academic misconduct by students or graduates of the University. These procedures apply to all types of academic misconduct including plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, falsification, cheating, deceit and personation.

The University takes very seriously any suspected incidences of academic misconduct and aims to ensure that all suspected cases are investigated efficiently and dealt with appropriately.

## Scope: Mandatory Procedure

All staff and students

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## Document control

Dates	Approved: 30.05.19	Starts: 01.08.2019	Equality impact assessment:	Amendments:	Next Review: 2023/24
				11.12.15 02.06.16 16.06.17 05.07.18 30.05.19 24.09.20 16.01.23	

## Approving authority

Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)

## Consultation undertaken

College Academic Misconduct Officers, College administrative staff dealing with academic misconduct, EUSA.

## Section responsible for procedure maintenance & review

Academic Services

## Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations

Academic Misconduct Report Form  
Code of Student Conduct

## UK Quality Code

UK Quality Code – Assessment

## Procedures superseded by this procedure

Previous versions of the Procedures for Dealing with Suspected Academic Misconduct

## Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format please email [Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk).

## Keywords

Academic misconduct, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, falsification, cheating, deceit, personation



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### 1. Definition of academic misconduct

- 1.1 Academic misconduct is defined by the University as the use of unfair means in any University assessment. This includes assisting a student to make use of unfair means, and doing anything prejudicial to the good conduct of the assessment. Examples of misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, self-plagiarism (that is, submitting the same work for credit twice at the same or different institutions), collusion, falsification, cheating (including contract cheating, where a student pays for work to be written or edited by somebody else), deceit, and personation (that is, impersonating another student or allowing another person to impersonate a student in an assessment).
- 1.2 These procedures explain how the University investigates allegations of academic misconduct in relation to any work submitted for assessment. The University may also investigate cases where a student is alleged to have committed an act of academic misconduct in a piece of work which has not been submitted for assessment at the University (e.g. a conference paper or publication) under the Code of Student Conduct, where this may represent a breach of the Code:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline)
- 1.3 Staff investigating allegations of academic misconduct will make a decision based on the balance of probabilities. This means that they will be satisfied that an academic misconduct offence has been committed if they consider that, on the evidence available, it is more likely than not that an offence has been committed.
- 1.4 A School Academic Misconduct Officer (SAMO) and a College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO) may nominate a deputy to hold meetings with students in cases where there is a conflict of interest or where subject specific expertise is required e.g. where there is reasonable doubt that a student's work may not be their own and further enquiry into the student's work is required in order to establish whether there is a potential case of academic misconduct.

#### **A. Suspected academic misconduct in assessed work submitted for taught courses**

### 2. Reporting of suspected academic misconduct in taught courses

- 2.1 Any member of staff who has evidence that a student may have committed an academic misconduct offence in an assessed piece of work submitted for a taught course must complete an Academic Misconduct Report Form. They will submit the form and any other relevant documentation to the School Academic Misconduct Officer (SAMO), informing the relevant Course Organiser. The work under investigation will be assessed and awarded a face value mark prior to referral to the SAMO. The face value mark is the mark that the work is believed to merit based solely on the content as presented, assuming no academic misconduct has taken place.
- 2.2 The Academic Misconduct Report Form is available at:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/academic-misconduct](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/academic-misconduct)



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- 3. Investigation by the School Academic Misconduct Officer (SAMO) – suspected academic misconduct in taught courses**
- 3.1 The SAMO is responsible for deciding whether there is a case to answer. The SAMO will discuss the case with the relevant Course Organiser and/or marker and can consult with the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO) if necessary. If the SAMO decides that there are grounds for investigation, they will determine whether they are able to deal with the case or whether it needs to be referred to a CAMO.
- 3.2 A SAMO (or nominee) may, at their discretion, invite a student to a preliminary meeting (either online or in person) or request a written statement from students before deciding how to proceed with the case. If a meeting is requested, the student may be accompanied at that meeting by a member of the University community, e.g. their Personal Tutor / Student Adviser or an adviser from the Edinburgh University Students' Association Advice Place. The SAMO or CAMO may not draw any inference if the student chooses not to attend the meeting.
- 3.3 The case will not require referral to the CAMO provided that it meets all of the following criteria:
- The SAMO is satisfied that the case has come about through a genuine lack of understanding by the student; **and**
  - It is a first offence (the relevant College can advise where it is a potential repeat offence); **and**
  - The SAMO believes that the case is minor in nature and can be appropriately dealt with by issuing a warning or applying a mark penalty of no more than 10 marks in accordance with the relevant [Common Marking Scheme](#), except in cases where the component is worth 5% or less of the course mark. In these cases, if appropriate, the SAMO can apply a penalty that reduces the component to mark to zero.
- In cases where the SAMO is unsure about whether the criteria above apply, the SAMO should consult the CAMO, who will determine whether the SAMO can deal with the case.
- 3.4 In cases which satisfy the criteria in 3.3, the SAMO or another relevant member of academic staff will address the issue with the student in assessment feedback, by email, or in a meeting within 15 working days of receiving an allegation of misconduct. The student should be issued with a warning and/or penalty, and directed towards an appropriate source of support within the University. A record of the breach must be maintained by the SAMO and the student should be warned about the consequences of any further misconduct allegations.
- 3.5 A face value mark that is appropriate for the work submitted as is should have been determined by this point. A fair estimate mark that suitably reflects the student's own contribution to the work and takes the minor misconduct or poor scholarship into account should then be established.
- 3.6 The SAMO will refer all cases which fail to meet the criteria set out at 3.3 above to the CAMO. Allegations of serious misconduct, including examination misconduct and contract cheating, will always be referred to the CAMO.
- 3.7 The SAMO must refer cases to the CAMO within 15 working days of the release of provisional marks for the cohort. Any allegations which arise outside of this period must also be referred to the CAMO within 15 working days of being detected.



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- 3.8 When referring a case to the CAMO, the SAMO must complete the relevant section of the Academic Misconduct Report Form and submit this with any relevant documentation to the College Academic Misconduct Administrator.
- 3.9 When a case has been referred to the SAMO or the CAMO, marks for the student must not be ratified by Boards of Examiners or published until the investigation has been concluded.
- 4. Investigation by the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO) - suspected academic misconduct in taught courses**
- 4.1 The CAMO is responsible for investigating all cases of suspected academic misconduct referred to them by a SAMO and for deciding on the penalty (if any) to be applied. As part of this investigation, the CAMO should ascertain whether or not this is the student's first academic misconduct offence.
- 4.2 If the CAMO considers there is a case to answer, they will write to the student suspected of academic misconduct describing the alleged offence and inviting the student to respond to the evidence reported by the School. The CAMO will copy the initial correspondence to the student's Personal Tutor / Student Adviser and encourage the student to speak with their Personal Tutor / Student Adviser.
- 4.3 Where the student acknowledges the offence and there is sufficient information for the CAMO to make a decision, the CAMO may decide that there is no need for a formal academic misconduct interview. In such cases the CAMO will write to the student and the SAMO, to inform them of the outcome and any penalty decision. The SAMO will advise the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners of the decision and any penalty to be enacted (see Section 6). If the CAMO's recommendations relate to specific staff members, the SAMO will forward each recommendation to the relevant staff member. Where appropriate, the SAMO, or another member of academic staff, will also offer to meet with the student concerned in order to provide advice on academic best practice
- 4.4 In all other cases, the CAMO will invite the student to attend an interview. The interview will be conducted by a panel chaired by the CAMO (or nominee), and including at least one representative SAMO from that College (not from the same School as the student). The CAMO will be assisted by a note-taker who will take a record of the meeting.
- 4.5 Where the CAMO conducts an interview with the student, this should be held in person wherever possible. The student may be accompanied by a member of the University community, e.g. an adviser from the Edinburgh University Students' Association Advice Place, or their Personal Tutor / Student Adviser. If the student is unable to attend in person, the CAMO will consult with the student and select one of the following options:
- To conduct the interview electronically (e.g. by video, web-camera, etc.); **or**
  - To offer the student the opportunity to make a written submission.
- 4.6 In exceptional cases, the panel may invite an academic staff member with relevant specialist knowledge to attend the interview as an expert witness. In such cases, the expert will provide specialist knowledge to assist the panel in making a decision. However, the expert will not form part of the panel, and will not be involved in any decision making.
- 4.7 The purpose of the interview will be to enable the panel to obtain further relevant information about the alleged academic misconduct offence and to allow the student the opportunity to put



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forward their response to the allegation. The panel will take this information into account when deciding on any penalty to be applied.

- 4.8 Following the interview, the CAMO will send a confidential report of the meeting to the student. The student will be given the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of the report. The CAMO will then approve a final version of the report.
- 4.9 The CAMO, in consultation with the rest of the panel, will decide on the penalty, if any, to be applied (see 5.1 below). The CAMO will inform the student of the decision as soon as possible following the outcome of the meeting.
- 4.10 The CAMO will send a report of the meeting, the outcome, and any recommendations arising from the case, to the reporting SAMO.
- 4.11 The SAMO will forward the outcome of the case, including any penalty to be enacted, to the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners (see section 6). If the CAMO's recommendations relate to specific staff members, the SAMO will forward each recommendation to the relevant staff member.
- 4.12 If an allegation of academic misconduct is upheld in relation to a student registered on a programme with Fitness to Practise requirements, further action may be taken under the relevant College Fitness to Practise Procedure. This will not involve reinvestigating the allegation of academic misconduct.

### 5. **Penalty decisions available to the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO) - academic misconduct in taught courses**

- 5.1 In deciding whether or not it is appropriate to apply a penalty, and which penalty to apply, the CAMO will take into account the severity, perceived intent and benefit to the student of the academic misconduct, as well as any previous academic misconduct offences.
- 5.2 Any penalty will apply **only** to the specific work under investigation, which in itself may represent only a part of the overall course assessment. The College will retain a record of any penalties applied by the CAMO, but this will not appear on a student's transcript. In cases where one or more students have colluded on a piece of work, penalty decisions for each student will be made on an individual basis.
- 5.3 Where the student claims that the affected assessment was impacted by special circumstances, the CAMO will advise the student to request consideration of these by the appropriate Special Circumstances Committee. The CAMO will not take account of special circumstances in reaching a penalty decision.
- 5.4 The following options are available to the CAMO:
  - (a) To decide that there is no case to answer and no penalty is therefore to be applied;
  - (b) In the case of a first offence which is a result of poor scholarly practice rather than any deliberate attempt to deceive, the CAMO may decide that a mark penalty will not be appropriate;
  - (c) A penalty deducting 10, 20 or 30 marks from the face value mark will be applied. The penalty applied should be proportionate to the offence. The face value mark must be expressed as a percentage using the relevant [Common Marking Scheme](#) (e.g., 15/20)



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- must be presented as 75% so that, for example, a 30 mark penalty would reduce the mark to 45%);
- (d) The mark is to be reduced to zero;
  - (e) In cases where students have colluded in producing a piece of work, the face value mark may be split (not necessarily equally) between the students involved. For instance, a face value mark of 70 may be split equally between two students, so that each student receives a mark of 35;
  - (f) In serious cases or where the student has a record of having committed a number of previous academic misconduct offences, the CAMO may decide to refer the case for disciplinary action under the Code of Student Conduct. In such cases, the CAMO investigation is equivalent to that of the Conduct Investigator for other student conduct cases, and no further investigation is required under the Code of Student Conduct. The CAMO may refer the case to a Student Discipline Officer, or to the Student Discipline Committee, as appropriate. If referring to the Student Discipline Committee, the CAMO should contact the Secretary to the Student Discipline Committee to discuss the matter. Details of the University disciplinary procedures and of the penalties available to Student Discipline Officers and the Student Discipline Committee under the Code of Student Conduct are available at:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline)

In addition to any actions taken under sections a-f above, the CAMO may also do the following:

- (g) Issue a formal warning and/or ask the student to attend a mandatory meeting with the SAMO to discuss good academic practice.

### 6. Application of penalties by the Board of Examiners - taught courses

- 6.1 The Board of Examiners is required to apply the penalty determined by the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO). It cannot apply any additional penalty for the offence. If the student has submitted Special Circumstances relating to the affected assessment the Board will take into account the decision of the Special Circumstances Committee when reaching its decision, in accordance with the Special Circumstances Policy:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/assessment/special-circumstances/](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/assessment/special-circumstances/)

### B. Suspected academic misconduct in work submitted for postgraduate research programmes (other than taught components, which are investigated in line with A)

#### 7. Reporting of suspected academic misconduct in postgraduate research programmes

- 7.1 Any member of staff who has evidence that a student undertaking a postgraduate research programme may have committed an academic misconduct offence (in the thesis or other work submitted for assessment and/or progression) must complete an Academic Misconduct Report Form in conjunction with the relevant SAMO. They must submit the form and any other relevant documentation to the CAMO.

- 7.2 The Academic Misconduct Report Form is available at:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/academic-misconduct](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/academic-misconduct)

#### 8. Investigation by the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO) – suspected academic misconduct in postgraduate research programmes





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- 8.1 The CAMO is responsible for investigating all cases of suspected academic misconduct referred to them by a SAMO and for deciding on the penalty (if any) to be applied.
- 8.2 If the CAMO considers that there is a case to answer, the CAMO will arrange for an academic misconduct panel comprising the CAMO and one other relevant academic member of staff (for example a relevant College Dean or a Graduate School Director or School Academic Misconduct Officer from a different School in the same College) to interview the student, following the same procedure as outlined in 4.5-4.8.
- 8.3 The CAMO, in consultation with the rest of the panel, will decide on the penalty, if any, to be applied (see 9.1 below). The CAMO will inform the student of the decision as soon as possible following the outcome of the meeting. The CAMO will provide the student's principal supervisor with an outline of the decision.
- 8.4 Except in cases referred for further consideration under the Code of Student Conduct, once the CAMO has approved the report of the meeting and decided on the penalty (if any) to be applied, the CAMO will submit a written report to the SAMO for forwarding to the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners. This will include details of any penalty which the Board must apply in light of the decision (see section 9 below).
- 9. Penalty decisions available to the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO) – academic misconduct in postgraduate research programmes**
- 9.1 In deciding whether or not it is appropriate to apply a penalty, and which penalty to apply, the CAMO will take into account the severity, perceived intent and benefit to the student of the academic misconduct, as well as any previous academic misconduct offences.
- 9.2 Where the student claims that the affected assessment was impacted by special circumstances, the CAMO will advise the student to request consideration of these by the appropriate Special Circumstances Committee. The CAMO will not take account of special circumstances in reaching a penalty decision.
- 9.3 The following options are available to the CAMO:
  - (a) Decide that there is no case to answer and no penalty is therefore to be applied;
  - (b) Allow the student to edit and resubmit the work having corrected the affected section(s)\*;
  - (c) Instruct the examiners to reassess the work with the affected sections removed (without offering the student the chance to edit)\*;
  - (d) Deem the thesis (or dissertation, or other assessment or components of assessment) to have failed and instruct the Board of Examiners accordingly;
  - (e) In serious cases or where the student has a record of having committed a number of previous academic misconduct offences, the CAMO may decide to refer the case for disciplinary action under the Code of Student Conduct. In such cases, the CAMO investigation is equivalent to that of the Conduct Investigator for other student conduct cases, and no further investigation is required under the Code of Student Conduct. The CAMO may refer the case to a Student Discipline Officer, or to the Student Discipline Committee, as appropriate. If referring to the Student Discipline Committee, the CAMO should contact the Secretary to the Student Discipline Committee to discuss the matter. Details of the University disciplinary procedures and of the penalties available to Student



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Discipline Officers and the Student Discipline Committee under the Code of Student Conduct are available at:

[www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline)

\*Options (b) and (c) may involve the thesis no longer being fit for a specific award.

9.4 Where the work affected has been submitted for annual review the CAMO will submit a report, including a recommendation, to the student's annual review panel.

9.5 The relevant College will keep a record of any penalties applied by the CAMO, but this will not appear on a student's transcript.

### 10. Application of penalties by the Board of Examiners – postgraduate programmes

10.1 The Board of Examiners is required to apply the penalty determined by the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO). It cannot apply any additional penalty for the offence. If the student has submitted Special Circumstances relating to the affected assessment the Board will take into account the decision of the Special Circumstances Committee when reaching its decision, in accordance with the Special Circumstances Policy:

[www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/assessment/special-circumstances/](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/assessment/special-circumstances/)

### 11. Students funded by UK Research Councils

11.1 Where there is evidence that a student who is receiving funding from one of the UK Research Councils may have committed an act of academic misconduct in their research, the University is required to report this to the relevant Research Council. Staff reporting suspected academic misconduct to the relevant CAMO should indicate on the Academic Misconduct Report form where a student is funded by a UK Research Council. Should the CAMO decide that there is a case to answer, they will notify the School, who will inform the relevant Research Council of the allegations against the student, and provide updates on the outcome of the case.

11.2 Policies and guidance relating to research integrity for students funded through UK research councils are published by UK Research and Innovation (formerly known as Research Councils UK), and can be found online at:

[www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/research-integrity/](http://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/research-integrity/)

## C. Suspected academic misconduct by graduates of the University

### 12. Reporting of suspected academic misconduct – graduates

12.1 Any member of staff who has evidence that a graduate of the University may have committed an academic misconduct offence that could impact upon the award, or classification of award, including the award of postgraduate Merit or Distinction, must complete an Academic Misconduct Report Form in conjunction with the relevant SAMO. They should submit the form and any other relevant documentation to the CAMO.

### 13. Investigation by College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO) - graduates

13.1 If the CAMO considers there is a case to answer, the CAMO will write to the graduate notifying them of the allegations and inviting them to attend an interview. The interview procedures for





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graduates are identical to the investigation and interview procedures for enrolled students (sections 4.2 to 5.4 for taught courses, and 8.2 to 9.6 for research programmes).

- 13.2 Following investigation the following options are open to the CAMO:
- (a) If there is no case to answer, or if it is concluded that academic misconduct is proven but was taken into account at the time of the original award, the CAMO will report the case and the outcome of the investigation to the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners. No further action will be taken;
  - (b) If the allegation is found to be proven, but is unlikely to have impacted on the award or classification of award (including the award of postgraduate Merit or Distinction) made to the graduate, the CAMO will report the case and the outcome of the investigation to the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners. No further action will be taken;
  - (c) If the allegation is found to be proven, and is likely to have impacted on the award or class of award made to the graduate, the CAMO will refer the case for disciplinary action under the Code of Student Conduct. In such cases, the CAMO investigation is equivalent to that of the Conduct Investigator for other student conduct cases, and no further investigation is required under the Code of Student Conduct. The CAMO may refer the case to a Student Discipline Officer, or to the Student Discipline Committee, as appropriate. If referring to the Student Discipline Committee, the CAMO should contact the Secretary to the Student Discipline Committee to discuss the matter. Details of the University disciplinary procedures and of the penalties available to Student Discipline Officers and the Student Discipline Committee under the Code of Student Conduct are available at: [www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline)

### D. Review of a College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO) decision

#### 14. Request for a review by the Board of Examiners

- 14.1 If the Board of Examiners believes that there is a justifiable reason to challenge the CAMO's decision about the penalty to be applied, the Convener may request that the decision be referred for review by the CAMOs of the University's other two Colleges jointly. The relevant Convener will submit a request in writing to the relevant contact in Academic Services, outlining the reasons for challenging the decision. The Convener will write to the student to inform them that their case has been referred for review, explaining that the final course result has therefore not yet been agreed.
- 14.2 Academic Services will arrange for the case to be reviewed by the CAMOs of the other two Colleges. The original investigating CAMO will be required to submit a copy of all of the case documentation which was considered by the CAMO along with copies of the report and decision letter. Each CAMO will be sent the documentation and will be asked to come to a decision separately before meeting to discuss the case; this meeting may be held by correspondence. The CAMOs may decide to invite the student to a further academic misconduct interview, following the same procedure as outlined in section 4.5. The CAMOs may be assisted by a note-taker who will take a record of the meeting.
- 14.3 Once the meeting and any further academic misconduct interview has been held, the two reviewing CAMOs will make a joint decision about whether or not to uphold the original investigating CAMO's decision, to rescind a penalty or to apply an alternative penalty. In determining an alternative penalty, the reviewing CAMOs may only choose from those



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penalties listed in 5.4 (for work submitted as part of a taught course), 9.3 (for students undertaking postgraduate research programmes) and 13.2 (for graduates).

- 14.4 Academic Services will notify the Convener of the Board of Examiners and the student in writing of the joint CAMO decision. The original investigating CAMO will be informed of the outcome of the review. The Board will be required to adhere to that decision and cannot request a further review. The Convener of the Board of Examiners will write to the student to inform them of the final course result agreed by the Board.

### 15. Student right of appeal

- 15.1 CAMO decisions resulting in mark penalties are ratified by Boards of Examiners. Students have a right to appeal decisions made by Boards of Examiners, including decisions affected by the outcome of an academic misconduct investigation. Students wishing to submit an academic appeal should refer to the University's Student Appeal Regulations and related guidance at:

[www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals)

**16 January 2023**