# Procedures for Dealing with Suspected Academic Misconduct

**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

**Contact Officer**

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## Document control

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**Approving authority**

Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC)

**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
- Code of Student Conduct Guidance

**UK Quality Code**

UK Quality Code – B6

**Procedures superseded by this procedure**

Previous version 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 or telephone 0131 650 2138.

**Keywords**

Academic misconduct, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, falsification, cheating, deceit, personation
1. Reporting of suspected academic misconduct

1.1 Any member of staff who suspects that an academic misconduct offence has been committed in a piece of work submitted for assessment must complete an Academic Misconduct Report. This should be submitted in the first instance to the School Academic Misconduct Officer (SAMO) and copied to the Course Organiser. The report must be accompanied by all relevant documentation. Unless for good reason, the work under investigation should be considered for assessment along with the work of the other students and a face value mark\(^1\) applied prior to referral to the SAMO.

**NB:** Slightly different arrangements apply for the reporting of suspected academic misconduct by postgraduate research students. These are set out in section 9.

A copy of the Academic Misconduct Report Form is available: [http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/plagiarism](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/plagiarism)

2. Investigation by the School Academic Misconduct Officer (SAMO)

2.1 The SAMO is responsible for deciding whether there is a case to answer. He/she should consult with the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO) if necessary. If the SAMO decides that there are grounds for investigation, they will:

(a) ascertain from the relevant College whether this is a first or repeat offence for the student under investigation; and

(b) determine whether the case is ‘minor’ or ‘major’ (see 2.2 below).

**Minor Offence**

2.2 A case may be judged to be minor if it satisfies all the following criteria:
   - it is a first offence; \textit{and}
   - the student is a first or second year undergraduate; \textit{and}
   - the SAMO is satisfied that the case has come about through genuine lack of understanding (poor scholarship) rather than any deliberate intention to cheat; \textit{and}
   - the SAMO believes that the case can be appropriately dealt with without recourse to a mark penalty.

2.3 No mark penalty can be applied by the SAMO for minor cases of academic misconduct.

2.4 If the SAMO judges the case to be minor, he or she will arrange a meeting with the student, together with the relevant Course Organiser and/or marker. The student may be accompanied at that meeting by a member of the University community, e.g. their Personal Tutor or a EUSA adviser. If the student is a distance-learner or is unavoidably away from Edinburgh for a significant period (e.g. the summer vacation) contact will be by written correspondence either by letter or email.

**Major offence**

2.5 All cases which fail to meet the criteria set out at 2.2 above will be dealt with as major cases. Major cases of suspected academic misconduct are referred by the SAMO to the CAMO for investigation. Prior to referring the case, the SAMO may wish to check whether any other work

\(^1\) The face value mark is the mark that the work is believed to merit based solely on the content as presented.
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submitted by the student is similarly affected. The SAMO must complete the relevant section of the Academic Misconduct Report and submit this to the College Academic Misconduct Administrator together with all relevant case documentation. The SAMO should also alert the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners. This should be done as soon as possible.

3. Investigation by the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO)

3.1 The CAMO is responsible for investigating all major cases of suspected academic misconduct referred to them by a SAMO and for deciding on the penalty (if any) to be applied.

3.2 Having reviewed the case documentation and the report submitted by the SAMO, the CAMO will decide whether a formal academic misconduct interview is necessary (see 3.4) and, if so, will arrange a formal academic misconduct interview with the student(s).

3.3 Where the student fully and willingly acknowledges the offence and does not wish to have an opportunity to offer further comment, the CAMO may decide that there is no need for a formal academic misconduct interview. In such cases the CAMO may simply write to the student and the Convener of the Board of Examiners with their decision on the penalty. In such cases the SAMO should be requested to meet with the student concerned in order to provide advice on academic best practice. This route would never be appropriate in the case of repeat offenders.

3.4 Where the CAMO decides that a formal academic misconduct interview is appropriate, the interview panel, which will be chaired by the CAMO, will normally comprise at least one representative from the relevant College Academic Misconduct Panel which is made up of the SAMOs from that College (not from the same School as the student) and any other relevant member of staff. The student may be accompanied by a member of the University community, e.g. a EUSA adviser or Personal Tutor. It is preferable for the student to attend for interview in person if at all possible, however if they are unable to attend they may choose to be represented by a member of the University community, such as their EUSA adviser.

3.5 The Personal Tutor will be copied into the summons for interview letter but not sent the documentation.

3.6 The purpose of the interview will be to enable the interview panel to obtain further relevant information on the alleged incident and to allow the student the opportunity to put forward their response to the allegation. The panel will take into account the information obtained at the interview in coming to a decision on any penalty to be applied.

3.7 Following the interview, the CAMO will circulate as soon as possible a draft confidential report of the meeting. The student will be given the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of the draft report before it is finalised. The report will not normally be copied more widely (e.g. to a EUSA Adviser or Personal Tutor) unless this is specifically requested by the student.

3.8 The CAMO, in consultation with the rest of the interview panel, will decide on the penalty, if any, to be applied (see 4.1 below). The student will be informed of the decision as soon as possible following the interview and not normally at the time of the interview.

3.9 Once the report and the penalty are agreed, the CAMO will submit a written report to the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners, copied to the SAMO. This will include details of any penalty which the Board will be required to apply in light of the academic misconduct (see section 5).
4. **Major Offences: Penalties**

4.1 Having investigated a major case of suspected academic misconduct, the interview panel will decide what penalty, if any, will be applied. The CAMO will be responsible for the final decision, although he/she will consult with the members of the interview panel. The panel will take into account the nature of the offence, the individual circumstances, and the penalty applied in similar cases in their College. The following options are available to the CAMO:

(a) There is found to be 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 scholarship rather than any deliberate attempt to cheat, the CAMO may decide that a mark penalty will not be appropriate;

(c) A mark penalty of -10% or -30% of the maximum available mark is to be applied to the face value mark awarded to the piece of work under investigation. The penalty applied should be proportional to the offence. This highlights the importance of the awarding of a face value mark to the work prior to investigation. Any penalty will apply only to that piece of work under investigation which may represent only a percentage of the mark awarded for a course.

For example: A student is found to have plagiarised in an assessment worth 50% of the mark for that course. The assessment is marked out of 100. The student has been given a face value mark of 60. If a -30% mark penalty is applied by the CAMO, their mark of 60 will be reduced by 30, leaving them with a final mark of 30 for that assessment. If a -10% mark penalty is applied, their mark will be reduced by 10 leaving the student with a final mark of 50 for that assessment. In either case any mark(s) for the additional coursework contributing the other 50% of the overall mark for the course, will not be affected.

(d) The mark is to be reduced to zero;

(e) In cases where students have colluded in producing a piece of work the mark awarded can be shared (not necessarily equally) between the students involved if this is considered appropriate by the CAMO;

(f) In very exceptional circumstances the CAMO may allow a resubmission of the piece of work concerned;

(g) In exceptionally serious cases or where the student is a serial repeat offender, the CAMO may decide to refer the case for further consideration under the Code of Student Conduct. 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:

http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline

5. **Application of penalties**

5.1 The Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners will be notified in writing of the penalty which is to be applied (see 3.8 above). The Board of Examiners is required to apply the penalty imposed by the CAMO. It must not apply any additional penalty for the offence. In the event of a significant delay in arranging a meeting of the Board of Examiners, Convener’s Action may be taken so that the penalty can be applied in good time. The Convener must write to the student to inform them of the mark agreed by the Board in a timely manner.
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5.2 In exceptional circumstances, if the Board of Examiners disagrees with the CAMO’s decision on 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 Convener should write to the student to inform them that their case has been referred for review, explaining that the final mark had therefore not yet been agreed.

6. Request for a review of a CAMO decision

6.1 If the Board of Examiners wishes to request a review of the CAMO decision (see 5.2 above), the Convener will submit a request in writing as soon as possible to the relevant contact in Academic Services, Old College (currently Ailsa Taylor ailsa.taylor@ed.ac.uk). A brief report outlining the reasons for the Board’s request for review must be submitted.

6.2 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. A meeting to discuss the case will be arranged as soon as possible and will involve both CAMOs and a representative from Academic Services. The CAMOs may decide to invite the student to a further academic misconduct interview, for example, if further information is required or if there are concerns about the operation of the previous interview. If a further interview is not deemed necessary, the CAMOs will come to a joint decision there and then.

6.3 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 should write to the student to inform them of the final mark agreed by the Board.

7. Right of appeal

7.1 Students have a right to appeal decisions made by Board of Examiners, including decisions affected by the outcome of an academic misconduct investigation. Students wishing to submit such an appeal should refer to the University’s Student Appeal Regulations and related guidance which can be accessed on the Academic Services website at:

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/undergraduate/academic-appeals/overview

This includes information on the specific grounds under which students may submit an academic appeal and details of the University’s procedures for consideration of appeals.

7.2 For very serious cases of academic misconduct where a penalty has been applied by a Student Discipline Officer or by the University Student Discipline Committee, arrangements for right of appeal are set out in the Code of Student Conduct

http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline

8. Suspected academic misconduct by students who have since graduated
8.1 The University takes seriously allegations of academic misconduct occurring in any assessed coursework, including work submitted in the course of their studies by students who have since graduated. If academic misconduct is suspected to have occurred in work which was assessed by the University for the award of a degree, diploma or certificate and it transpires that the nature and extent of the offence may have an impact upon the award or class of award, the case will be investigated by the relevant CAMO. As part of their investigation the CAMO will write to the graduate notifying them of the allegations and inviting their response.

8.2 Following retrospective investigation the following options are open to the CAMO:

(a) If the allegation is found not to be substantiated, the CAMO will report the case and the outcome of the investigation to the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners and to the University Secretary. No further action will be taken;

(b) If it is concluded that account of the academic misconduct was taken at the time of the original award, the CAMO will report the case and the outcome of the investigation to the Convener of the Board of Examiners and to the University Secretary and no further action will be taken;

(c) If the allegation is found to be proven, to be substantial and to merit further action, the case will be referred for further consideration under the Code of Student Conduct.

8.3 If an offence is found to have occurred in assessed work submitted by a graduate in the course of their studies, the University may decide to reduce the classification of any award conferred or to revoke the award.

8.4 Graduates have the same right of appeal as that which exists for matriculated students (see section 7 above).

9. Suspected academic misconduct by postgraduate research students

9.1 Where academic misconduct is suspected to have been committed by a student at postgraduate research level, the alleged offence should be reported directly to the College Academic Misconduct Officer rather than via the SAMO. Any member of staff who suspects that an academic misconduct offence has been committed in work submitted for assessment by a doctoral student must complete an Academic Misconduct Report Form. This should be submitted, together with all related documentation, to the relevant College Academic Misconduct Administrator.

A copy of the Academic Misconduct Report Form is available: http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/plagiarism

9.2 The Internal Examiners will produce a report for the SAMO including all relevant documents and a view as to whether the offence is minor or major.

9.3 The SAMO will send the completed report form and all documentation to the CAMO.

9.4 The CAMO will assess whether there is a case to answer and, if so, whether the case should be regarded as a minor or major offence.

Minor Offence

9.5 If the offence is deemed minor, the following arrangements will normally apply:
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If it is considered that there has been no deliberate attempt on the part of the student to deceive they will be interviewed by the CAMO. The student will normally be informed at this stage not only of the offence, but also of any other areas of significant academic concern within the work. This will enable the candidate to address all concerns within a single resubmission, as permitted by the University Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

The work submitted will be assessed on academic merit only after any affected section(s) have been rewritten. This will be regarded as corrective work under provision 28(b) of the University Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees;

The matter will be taken into account in the examiners recommendations to the Board of Examiners or School PhD review group;

Major Offence

9.4 If the offence is deemed major, the following arrangements will normally apply:

- Provided all are agreed that the offence should be regarded as major, an academic misconduct panel comprising the CAMO and one other (for example the Head of Graduate School or SAMO from a different school in the same college) will interview the student. The panel will determine what penalty should be imposed or, if the case is very serious, may instead decide that it should be referred for consideration under the Code of Student Conduct.
- Excepting cases referred for further consideration under the Code of Student Conduct, the academic misconduct panel will notify the Convener of the Board of Examiners of the penalty to be applied.
- The CAMO will notify in writing the convener of the relevant Board of Examiners of the penalty which is to be applied and will also inform the student.

Penalties

9.5 The following options are available to the CAMO:

(a) There is found to be no case to answer and no penalty is therefore to be applied;
(b) (Where the offence is deemed minor,) Require the work to be assessed on academic merit without considering the affected section(s). This will be regarded as corrective work under provision 28 (b) of the University Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees;
(c) Require the work to be re-examined with the material in question discounted. No account can be taken of the consequences of this action, which might include failure or the award of a lesser degree;
(d) Require the work to be resubmitted with the inappropriate material removed and sufficient editing done to make the thesis/report comprehensible and complete. In such cases, the student will be advised of the time allowed for the resubmission. A consequence of this may be that the resubmitted thesis is no longer sufficiently substantial for the original degree and so may only be resubmitted for a lesser degree;
(e) Deem the thesis a fail and instruct the Board of Examiners accordingly.

2 For postgraduate research students, the Board of Examiners will normally be the College committee which is responsible for overseeing postgraduate research studies within that College.
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(f) (Where the offence is deemed extremely serious.) Refer the case for further consideration under the Code of Student Conduct.

College Academic Misconduct Officers (CAMOs) and Administrators

10.1 College of Humanities and Social Science:

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Dr Lloyd Llewelyn-Jones
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10.2 College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine:

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