

The University of Manchester

Academic Malpractice Procedure¹

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Paragraph 2(r) of Regulation XVII (Conduct and Discipline of Students) (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=6530>) (the “**Regulation**”) defines academic malpractice as a type of misconduct which can be subject to the University’s disciplinary processes.

2. Academic integrity²

- 2.1. Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Assessments exist to help students learn; grades exist to show how fully this goal is attained. Therefore all work and all grades should result from the student’s own understanding and effort. Academic integrity involves values such as avoidance of cheating or plagiarism; maintenance of academic standards; honesty and rigor in research and academic publishing.
- 2.2. It is the responsibility of the University and its constituent parts to ensure that all students understand the academic requirements expected of them. As a minimum students should be made aware of academic integrity and academic malpractice through handbooks and online resources. In particular this Procedure should be available to students. These responsibilities should be balanced against those of the students who must clearly indicate any lack of understanding concerning academic malpractice and must engage with the resources made available on this subject.
- 2.3. It is good practice for academic integrity to be highlighted to students throughout their programme and for students to be given the opportunity to think critically, to reflect, construct and revise arguments and to proof-read.
- 2.4. The University can minimise the opportunity for academic malpractice by:
 - 2.4.1. Providing the information contained within this Procedure.
 - 2.4.2. Varying assessment tasks, topics and questions from year to year.

¹ Any reference in this Procedure to a named officer should also be read as a reference to their delegated nominee.

² Academic Integrity is referred to in this Procedure within the context of academic malpractice. The concept of Academic Integrity is much broader.

- 2.4.3. Using forms of assessment that require demonstration of the understanding of knowledge rather than straightforward repetition of such knowledge.
 - 2.4.4. Providing feedback in accordance with the Policy on Feedback to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=6518>), or for Postgraduate Research Students, the PGR Code of Practice (<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/rbe/rdrd/code/>).
 - 2.4.5. Passing work through Turnitin (the University's plagiarism detection software).
 - 2.4.6. Providing clear information on the expectations of work, assessment criteria and the assessment process.
 - 2.4.7. Giving students the opportunity to engage with academic supervision where this is available for their level of study and assessment.
- 2.5. Study skills support should be available to students in their academic School. Support also exists within other areas of the University, such as through the Library's My Learning Essentials (<http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/using-the-library/students/training-and-skills-support/my-learning-essentials/>).

3. Definitions

3.1. Academic malpractice

3.1.1. Academic malpractice is any activity – intentional or otherwise - that is likely to undermine the integrity essential to scholarship and research. It includes plagiarism, collusion, fabrication or falsification of results, contract cheating and anything else that could result in unearned or undeserved credit for those committing it. Academic malpractice can result from a deliberate act of cheating or may be committed unintentionally. Whether intended or not, all incidents of academic malpractice will be treated seriously by the University.

3.1.2. Types of academic malpractice include:

3.1.2.1. Plagiarism: the presentation, intentionally or unwittingly, of the ideas, work or words of other people without proper, clear and unambiguous acknowledgement. It includes the copying of the work of any other person, including another student. Plagiarism may include the close paraphrasing, or minimal adaption of another person's words, illustrations, computer code, graph, diagrams etc. Sources can be any available material, such as websites, articles, books and lecture slides.

3.1.2.2. Self-plagiarism: the submission, in whole or in part, of a student's own work, where that work has been submitted for a different assessment, either at the University or at a different institution. Students who use a previous piece of work or publication in a future piece of work should ensure that they properly reference themselves and the extent of such use should not be excessive.

3.1.2.3. Collusion: when a student or students permit or condone another student or students, to share a piece of work subject to assessment in order to gain a mark or grade to which they are not entitled. Students who allow another student to copy their work are also committing collusion and both the copier and the provider of the work are liable to be penalised.

- 3.1.2.3.1. The University does however allow collaboration where students work in groups as part of their programme of research or in the preparation of projects and similar assessments. The expectations and marking of the work should be made clear by the person setting the work and students should ensure that they are able to identify their contribution to the piece of work in group submissions. If malpractice appears in a group piece of work, then the group will normally be expected to take collective responsibility for the work and be seen as part of the same disciplinary hearing, unless individual members are able to (i) identify who contributed the element containing malpractice and/or (ii) distinguish their contribution to that of the other members of the group.
- 3.1.2.4. Fabrication or falsification of results, figures or data: the presentation or inclusion in a piece of work, by individual students or groups of students, of figures or any data (quantitative or qualitative) which have been made up or altered and which have no basis in verifiable sources; this may or may not involve other instances of academic malpractice.
- 3.1.2.5. Possession of unauthorised material in an examination: when a student intentionally or unwittingly possesses unauthorised material in an examination. The material need not be used during the examination or pertinent to an examination for this definition to be met.
- 3.1.2.6. Contract cheating: the commissioning of a piece of work by a third party, beyond basic proofreading (<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/policy-guidance/teaching-and-learning/learning/proofreading/>). This may be where a student engages an essay mill to request that the essay mill produces a piece of assessed work for the student. This may also include the use of crowdsourcing, where a student obtains content from, or allows editing by, others and fails to acknowledge the contribution.
- 3.1.3. Indicators of types of academic malpractice may include (but are not limited to) the following:
- 3.1.3.1. A significant block or numerous blocks of material or copied text expressing ideas or concepts taken from the work of others without appropriate acknowledgement or citation. This can include material which is:
- 3.1.3.1.1. not appropriately contained in quotation marks.
 - 3.1.3.1.2. referenced in a bibliography but not cited properly
 - 3.1.3.1.3. copied from others and which has been subjected to minor or superficial linguistic changes and presented as the student's own work, with or without citation.
- 3.1.3.2. Collusion between students as evidenced by structure, sources, a significant block or numerous blocks of copied text, (including copied text subjected to minor or superficial linguistic changes).
- 3.1.3.3. Blocks of copied illustrations, computer code, graph, diagrams or other resource taken from another student or the work of others without appropriate referencing.
- 3.1.3.4. Results or data which cannot be substantiated on the basis of the material submitted by the student.

3.2. Poor academic practice

3.2.1. Poor academic practice involves poor citation practice where there is evidence that the student did not apply the appropriate rules of academic writing and/or where the extent of copied material does not meet the level of significance such that it can be considered academic malpractice. Poor academic practice will not instigate disciplinary proceedings but can be taken account of through the marking process. The work in question may include limited:

3.2.1.1. Material or copied text expressing ideas or concepts taken from the work of others in the student's own words but without appropriate citation.

3.2.1.2. Material or copied text which is referenced in the bibliography but is not properly cited.

3.2.1.3. Material or copied text that has been subjected to minor linguistic changes with or without citation.

3.2.1.4. Collusion between students as evidenced by structure, source or copied text; this includes cases where the written work is original throughout.

3.2.1.5. Pieces of work which are largely constructed of the work and words of others.

3.3. Misconduct in research

3.3.1. For the purposes of student discipline, research misconduct is defined by the same types of research misconduct as listed under the Code of Practice for Investigating Concerns about the Conduct of Research (<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/rbe/ethics-integrity/research-misconduct/research-misconduct/>) ("**Code of Practice**"). Similarly, what is considered to be poor practice in research will also mirror the definitions under the Code of Practice.

3.3.2. Some types of academic malpractice may constitute types of research misconduct and vice versa. Where there is such an overlap, the disciplinary process will usually focus on considering the dominant allegation(s) against the student.

3.3.3. Research misconduct can be committed by a student at any level of study, as part of work that is being, or has been, conducted or produced for the purposes of assessment or publication. Where a concern regarding the conduct of research arises about a current student, this would normally be dealt with through the disciplinary process, rather than the Code of Practice.

3.3.4. If the alleged conduct affects a published piece of research work or a supervisor is implicated in a complaint about research misconduct then the Code of Practice would usually take precedence in the first instance for the purposes of investigating the allegation being made. Allegations that might meet either of these criteria should be referred to the Head of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity as per the Code of Practice.

3.3.5. At the conclusion of an investigation under the Code of Practice disciplinary action may be recommended.

4. Detection³

³ This links to the Assessment sections of the Procedure for Summary Disciplinary Panels and the Procedure for the University Disciplinary Panel.

4.1. General

- 4.1.1. Disciplinary action for academic malpractice can usually only be taken where a student has submitted summative assessment containing malpractice. Disciplinary action cannot usually be taken prior to submission. If an academic member of staff notices malpractice in work prior to it being submitted, it is reasonable to expect that the member of staff would warn the student of the consequences of committing malpractice.
- 4.1.2. Most essay or text-based assignments are submitted through Turnitin. This software allows the comparison of the work submitted for assessment, with other pieces of work or publications stored on Turnitin's database. Turnitin detects whether there is any similarity in the work to the other sources and produces a report showing where the similarity exists, the amount of similarity and a reference to the source. Turnitin alone does not confirm the presence of malpractice; an academic judgement must be made to reach this conclusion.
- 4.1.3. It is expected that examiners of assignments will:
- 4.1.3.1. Review any Turnitin report to help determine whether academic malpractice may have occurred.
- 4.1.3.2. In cases of poor academic practice, mark the piece of work in the usual way taking account of the poor academic practice and provide feedback to the student.
- 4.1.3.3. In cases of suspected academic malpractice:
- 4.1.3.3.1. Acquire the original source material where possible and indicate what sections of the material have been taken by the student, cross referring to the material's location in the student's work.
- 4.1.3.3.2. Produce a brief statement, explaining why they consider there to be malpractice in the student's work.
- 4.1.3.3.3. Continue to mark the work where possible as if the work does not contain academic malpractice. The mark should be withheld from the student pending any disciplinary action. It is acknowledged that marking can prove difficult in some cases especially when there is substantial academic malpractice. If examiners feel unable to mark the work then they should indicate the reasons why in their report.
- 4.1.3.3.4. Send the information above to an officer in the School ("**School Officer**"). This will usually be an Authorised University Officer ("**AUO**") (as defined in the Regulation)⁴, or nominee thereof e.g. Academic Malpractice Officer, Programme Director, Director of Teaching and Learning etc.
- 4.1.4. If academic malpractice is first suspected during a viva, then the examination should continue, as this will allow discussion that may evidence the extent to which the work is that of the student. The examiners should thereafter produce a statement, cross referring to the viva and written work, in keeping with 4.1.3.3.

⁴ See section 7 of Regulation XVII. AUOs are University staff e.g. a Head of School, who have the authority to investigate and take disciplinary action against students. This includes delegated nominees of the AUO, and which might include the School Officer.

4.1.5. The School Officer will decide whether there is poor academic practice in the work or potential academic malpractice. In the case of the former, the piece of work will be referred back to the examiner in question, with appropriate advice as to how to proceed. In the case of the latter, the School Officer should arrange for disciplinary action to be taken.

4.2. Possession of unauthorised material in an examination

4.2.1. Students are informed prior to the start of examinations that they should not have any unauthorised materials on their person. This might include any electronic device, revision notes or anything else which could give them an unfair advantage in the examination compared to their fellow students. The material need not be pertinent to the examination for it to be unauthorised.

4.2.2. Some material may be permitted for an examination but this will have been confirmed to the student in advance of the examination.

4.2.3. Invigilators monitor the conditions of an examination, including the detection of unauthorised material. Where unauthorised material is detected, the preliminary details of this should be recorded, including the type and content of the material, the time it was found, the examination title and start time etc. Often students are asked to leave the examination at the point unauthorised material is detected whilst the above details are obtained and the material is confiscated, but they may later be allowed to return to complete the examination in the time remaining.

4.2.4. The student will then be asked to attend a post-examination interview with a member of staff at the Student Services Centre within the Division of Student Admissions and Administration (if the examination was arranged centrally) or their academic School (if the examination was arranged locally). At the interview additional information will be sought from the student.

4.2.5. If it is agreed that an offence has likely been committed then the case will be referred on for appropriate disciplinary action.

4.3. Contract cheating

4.3.1. If there is a reasonable suspicion that a student may have commissioned a piece of work from a third party, but there is no direct evidence of this, then in agreement with the School Officer a viva voce can be arranged to give the student the opportunity to demonstrate that they:

4.3.1.1. Produced the work;

4.3.1.2. Undertook the reading and research themselves;

4.3.1.3. Undertook the preparatory work themselves;

4.3.1.4. Understand what they have written.

4.3.2. If a viva voce is held, the following principles shall be met:

4.3.2.1. If a viva voce is to be conducted it should not normally take place more than 30 days after the assessment feedback deadline.

4.3.2.2. The student should be given at least five working days notice of the requirement to attend the viva voce. An explanation of what a viva voce is, the purpose of it and the potential outcomes should be outlined in the invitation. It

should be made clear that the viva voce is arranged due to the detection of potential academic malpractice and it is to allow the student an opportunity to demonstrate that the work is their own; it will not contribute to any mark obtained for the piece of work.

4.3.2.3. Two members of academic staff (at least one of whom must be a subject specialist) must conduct the viva voce; this will normally be the School Officer and the examiner of the assessment.

4.3.2.4. The student may be accompanied by a person of their choice for support only (normally a fellow student, member of staff or Students' Union representative). Any individual accompanying the student should under no circumstances participate in the viva voce.

4.3.2.5. Reasonable adjustments must be made to ensure that candidates with additional support needs are not disadvantaged for reasons relating to a long-term medical condition, sensory impairment, specific learning difficulty and /or disability.

4.3.2.6. The viva voce will not normally exceed 30 minutes.

4.3.2.7. In exceptional circumstances the viva voce can be conducted via video link.

4.3.2.8. Intensive questions are expected. The questions asked should provide the student with the opportunity to demonstrate that the work is their own.

4.3.2.9. An accurate record of the viva voce should be taken; this record may be used to form the evidence base for any future disciplinary hearing. It may be necessary for an administrative member of staff to be present at the viva voce to make the record. The student is entitled to have a copy of the record.

4.3.3. The viva voce can have one of two outcomes:

4.3.3.1. The staff conducting the viva voce will confirm that they accept that the student wrote the work in question; no further action will be taken. The work should then be marked on its own merit, if it has not already been marked.

4.3.3.2. If the staff conducting the viva voce still remain doubtful of the authorship of the work in question, or the student admits that it is not their work, then the case should be referred for disciplinary action. Any future disciplinary panel should not include, as a member of the panel, the examiner or the same School Officer. The viva voce, in itself, will not result in a penalty being applied; a penalty can only be applied by a disciplinary panel.

5. Case handling

5.1. When academic malpractice has been identified the AUO responsible for assessing the allegation should gather any information that may be relevant. In particular, they should enquire as to whether a student has any previous offences for academic malpractice. This information is usually retained in the student's School record. This will assist the AUO in determining whether a case can be heard by a Summary Disciplinary Panel ("**SDP**") a, or if the case should be referred to the University Disciplinary Panel ("**UDP**").

5.2. The detection of academic malpractice will not normally lead to the review of a student's previous assessments, unless there is a reasonable suspicion that they may contain malpractice. If this is the case, prior to a disciplinary hearing, the AUO may review

previous pieces assessments, but this will not normally extend to assessments outside the student's current level of study.

5.3. Cases will be handled as follows:

Dealt with by	Case types
School-based SDP ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UG programmes levels 4, 5 and CPD – first offence • PGT programmes taught element – first offence
Faculty-based SDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UG programmes levels 4, 5 and CPD – second offences • UG level 6 and above – first offence • PGT programmes taught element – second offence • PGT dissertation element – first offence • PGR taught element – first offence
Student Services Centre-based SDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All UG or PGT programmes – first and second offences of possessing unauthorised material in centrally administered examinations, based on the divisions outlined in this table.
UDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UG programmes levels 4, 5 and CPD – third (or further) offences • UG programmes level 6 and above – second (or further) offences • PGT programmes taught element – third (or further) offences • PGT programmes dissertation element – any subsequent offence • PGR taught element – subsequent offence • PGR progression assessment, thesis or viva – first offence • Any student – a significant offence
Head of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misconduct in research by a student at any level of study if the criteria under 3.3 has been met.

5.4. Where it is alleged that a student has committed significant academic malpractice they will normally be referred to the UDP. In addition to the table under paragraph 5.2, the following may be of consideration in deciding whether a case is significant:

- 5.4.1. The suspected amount of malpractice is a particularly high proportion of the assessment.
- 5.4.2. The assessment containing suspected malpractice is high credit bearing and/or important to a student's award or progression.
- 5.4.3. It is suspected that multiple assessments in a single assessment period contain academic malpractice.

⁵ In cases concerning the University College for Interdisciplinary Learning ("UCIL"), as students studying with UCIL will be from a range of academic Schools, it is deemed that UCIL can operate in the same way as a School for the purpose of detecting and handling cases of academic malpractice in the assessments it oversees.

- 5.4.4. The penalty applied in any previous case. If a student has already had the maximum penalty applied for a first offence at summary level, then a subsequent offence may attract a penalty that is open only to the UDP.
- 5.4.5. The penalties open to summary level do not reflect the severity of the offence i.e. it is considered that the student's overall degree award should be reduced e.g. from an Honours degree to a Diploma.
- 5.4.6. Where there is prima facie evidence of substantial efforts to commit malpractice and avoid detection.
- 5.4.7. Where there is prima facie evidence of malpractice extending to already assessed work i.e. malpractice that was previously undetected.
- 5.5. If an offence relates to multiple students, but for one or more students it is a subsequent offence, then all students should be treated at the same level as the subsequent offence. Having, or not having, a previous offence on file can be taken into account in the application of a penalty.
- 5.6. As per the Procedure for Summary Disciplinary Panels, it is recommended that for SDPs considering first-offence allegations of academic malpractice, they comprise at least two persons, with the Chair being a Senior Lecturer (or above) or an academic with equivalent experience. Where an allegation relates to a subsequent offence, given the penalty applied might be higher and the consequences more severe, it is recommended that the panel is extended to three persons.
- 5.7. Examples:
- 5.7.1. A student has a first offence of academic malpractice on file for plagiarism from their first year. This was dealt with by a School-based SDP. A second offence arises, but this relates to unauthorised material in a second year examination; this is dealt with by a Student Services Centre-based SDP.
- 5.7.2. A student has a first offence on file relating to unauthorised material that was dealt with by an Student Services Centre-based SDP. A second offence of academic malpractice (plagiarism) arises and so this is dealt with by a Faculty-based SDP.
- 5.7.3. A Postgraduate Taught student is believed to have committed substantial plagiarism in a high credit bearing piece of work (dissertation). Although it is a first offence, the malpractice is considered to be significant and so is referred to the UDP.
- 5.7.4. Three level 5 Undergraduate students are believed to have colluded in a piece of work. One of the students has a previous offence of malpractice on file. The Faculty-based SDP differentiate the penalties applied, with the student who had a first offence on file, receiving a higher penalty. .

Related procedures:

- Procedure for Summary Disciplinary Panels
(<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=42773>)
- Procedure for the University Disciplinary Panel
(<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=42774>)

6. Document control

Document control box	
Policy / Procedure title:	Academic Malpractice Procedure
Date updated:	03 April 2019 (in effect September 2019)
Approving body:	Student Conduct and Discipline Committee
Version:	Unknown (at least 3)
Supersedes:	Academic Malpractice: Procedure for the Handling of Cases (July 2014)
Previous review dates:	Unknown
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Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statute XXI (Conduct, discipline and academic progress of students) • Regulation XVII (Conduct and Discipline of Students)
Equality relevance outcome:	High / Medium (delete as applicable)
Related policies/procedures/guidance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedure for Summary Disciplinary Panels • Procedure for the University Disciplinary Panel
Policy owner:	Sarah Littlejohn (Head of Campus Life) (Sarah.Littlejohn@manchester.ac.uk)
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Amendment history

Version	Date	Reason for change
1	07/2014	
2	04/2019	Substantive re-write of the procedure, including definitions and detection.
3		
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