

The University of Manchester

Detecting and Dealing with Fraudulent Applications – Registered Students Procedure

1. General Principles

The University is committed to ensuring that applicants are admitted to the University on the basis of accurate, genuine and complete information.

The inclusion of fraudulent information in applications to the University is normally detected at the admissions stage. However occasionally fraud may not be suspected or be detected until after a student has registered at the University.

The University works closely with other universities, UCAS, its contracted international educational agents and other recognised bodies to identify patterns of fraudulent activity in admissions. As result, the University will undertake proactive verification checks of particular cohorts of registered students or of specific qualifications to monitor its exposure to such fraudulent activity.

This procedure provides information on how the University will investigate suspected cases of admissions fraud once a student has registered with the University, and the possible consequences where it is determined, on the balance of probabilities, that they, or through someone acting on their behalf, have gained admission to the University through submitting fraudulent information.

2. Related contract and policy provisions

The [University Ordinance XVI: The Admission and Registration of Students](#) stipulates:

Section 1:

Admission to the University is subject to the requirement that the student will comply with the University's registration procedures and will duly observe the laws of the University.

Section 2

Before being admitted to a programme of study in the University, applicants must satisfy the particular requirements for the programme to which entry is sought, which will include acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy, and disclose all relevant facts and information having a bearing on their application for admission.

Section 7

The University reserves the right to terminate the registration of a student who is subsequently discovered to have omitted or falsified relevant facts or information in connection with their application, in contravention of paragraph 2 of this Ordinance.

The [Student Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy](#) states in section 19.2 Fraud, Omission and Plagiarism that:

Applicants may not omit any requested or relevant information, make any misrepresentation (for example, through plagiarism) or give false information at any point of the application process including after an offer is made. Should this occur the University reserves the right under the provisions of Ordinance XVI to dismiss the application, withdraw an offer of a place and/or revoke your registration. The University may also, in accordance with its obligations, notify external organisations about any suspected misrepresentation.

Scanned copies of documents are generally accepted during the admission process, but original documents can be requested at any stage. Decision makers are trained in detecting and dealing with fraudulent documents. Academic Schools and Divisions may ask to see original documents as part of the admissions selection process or at registration.

3. Definition of fraud

Fraud is deemed to have been committed when a person, or someone acting on their behalf, makes a dishonest representation for their own advantage or to cause another a loss, or dishonestly neglects to disclose information when they had a duty to do. In respect of admission to the University, fraudulent activity could include giving false information in an application regarding qualifications or experience, providing a fake certificate or reference to support an application, supplying misleading information on tuition fee status, omitting relevant information such as information relating to previous qualifications, or committing some other act of deception in order to gain admission to the University.

4. Investigation of fraud in the admissions process (post-registration)

There are many reasons why the University may review the authenticity of information provided by a Registered Student during the admissions process. These include but are not limited to:

- University staff may suspect fraud because a Registered Student is underperforming on their programme of study
- The University receives information that a Registered Student has gained their place on the basis of fraudulent documentation
- The University is notified by the awarding organisation that a test score or awarded grade has been cancelled due to fraudulent activity

Where the University is alerted to/detects potentially fraudulent activity, the admissions team for the academic School/Department will conduct an initial investigation and gather relevant evidence which may include email correspondence from the admissions stage, transcripts or certificates. The School/Department will refer the case to the Student Admissions' Training, Policy and Governance team in the Directorate for Student Experience (DSE) for further investigation.

The Training, Policy and Governance team will undertake a further investigation of the evidence supplied by the admissions team and attempt to formally verify the documentation such as transcripts

or certificates provided by the Registered Student during the admissions process. The process of investigation may vary according to the nature of the suspected fraud; however, it may include:

- Requesting further information from the Registered Student to verify their documents provided in the admissions process.
- Requesting certified copies of supporting documents, if not already received.
- Seeking confirmation from a third party, such as an awarding institution or an external verification service to confirm the Registered Student's grades or attendance.
- Contacting the referee on the application to confirm information provided or to check authenticity.

As part of the investigation process, the Training, Policy and Governance team may contact the Registered Student to ask for further information and to request their consent to carry out a verification check where this is required.

Verification checks may be carried out in relation to identity, residency status, immigration status, qualifications, references, and any other evidence presented by the Registered Student at the point of admission before registration.

The Registered Student may also be asked to present original documents. The Registered Student will be given a minimum of five working days to present the documents and will be informed when and where these should be presented. The team may retain the documents for up to three working days in order to conduct verification checks. The Registered Student will be provided with a receipt confirming which original documents have been provided.

A Registered Student who repeatedly refuses to give consent to a verification check or provide original documents when requested may give the University reasonable grounds to conclude, on the balance of probabilities, that admission fraud has occurred, entitling the University to terminate their registration.

5. Fraudulent Admissions Panel Meeting

If the Training, Policy and Governance team reasonably conclude from its investigation that a Registered Student may have submitted fraudulent information during the application process, the Training, Policy and Governance team will arrange for a Fraudulent Admissions Panel meeting to be scheduled. A member of the Training, Policy and Governance team will present the findings of the investigation to the Fraudulent Admissions Panel meeting.

The meeting may take place either on campus in person or online. The Registered Student is expected to attend an in-person panel meeting unless they are a student on a distance learning programme or an international student who is not in the UK. In those circumstances the Registered Student will normally be offered a remote online panel meeting.

The Panel will comprise:

- an academic member of the School/Department (usually Programme Director) or their nominee (this can be a non-academic member of staff)

- a senior administrative member of the School/Department (usually the Admissions Manager or Admissions Officer)
- a senior member of the DSE Student Admissions team (usually the DSE Admissions Manager or Admissions Officer - Training, Policy, and Governance) who will normally be the Chair of the Panel.

A Secretary/Note Taker will also be in attendance.

The Registered Student may, and is encouraged to, be accompanied to the meeting by a fellow student, a member of the University of Manchester Students' Union or member of staff of the University of their own choice. The accompanying person is present to provide support and guidance throughout the process, but they are not permitted to speak on behalf of the Registered Student or act as their representative during the meeting.

The Panel will explain to the Registered Student the allegation(s) with reference to the evidence in the casefile. The Registered Student shall have an opportunity to present their case and to provide any additional information and evidence they think may be relevant.

5.1 Invitation to the Fraudulent Admissions Panel Meeting

- The Registered Student will be given at least 5 working days' notice that a meeting has been scheduled.
- An invitation to the meeting will be sent to the Registered Student's University email address setting out the allegation(s) and potential outcomes. The Registered Student should respond to the invitation and confirm attendance or request to rearrange the Panel meeting within the timeframe provided.
- The Registered Student will be advised that the Panel meeting will go ahead in their absence should they not attend and have not requested that the meeting is rearranged in advance. Information on re-arranging a panel meeting is in section 5.2.
- The invitation email will include copies of all the case documents supporting the allegation of admissions fraud and include copies of the relevant sections of the Admissions Policy and Ordinance XVI
- The Registered Student will be invited to provide a written statement in advance of the meeting should they wish, along with any further information or documentation they wish to be taken into consideration.
- The Registered Student will be informed that they are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting by a fellow student, a member of the University of Manchester Students' Union or member of staff of the University of their own choice.

5.2 Re-arranging a Fraudulent Admissions Panel Meeting

The Fraudulent Admissions Panel meeting can be re-arranged once. The Registered Student should give a minimum of 24 hours' notice of the date/time of the meeting that they are unable to attend and wish to rearrange.

If the Registered Student declines the meeting or does not attend it, without requesting that it is re-scheduled in advance, the meeting may go ahead in their absence.

5.3 Submission of a written statement

The Registered Student may submit a written statement and provide supplementary documentary evidence ahead of or at the meeting for the Panel to consider.

5.4 Conducting the Fraudulent Admissions Panel Meeting

The meeting will be conducted in accordance with the following agenda:

- Introduction of the Panel
- Explanation of the allegation and supporting evidence
- Opportunity for Registered Student's reply including the consideration of any written statement and additional evidence they have submitted
- Explanation of relevant ordinance and policy and possible outcomes

5.5 Possible outcomes of the Fraudulent Admissions Panel Meeting

Possible outcomes of the Fraudulent Admission Panel meeting could include:

- a. A request for further information/documentation from the Registered Student, after which a further investigation will take place, and an additional panel meeting will be convened to consider this evidence. The Registered Student may or may not be invited to attend this meeting.
- b. If the Panel is satisfied that admissions documentation is valid and/or that the Registered Student, or someone acting on their behalf, has not committed admissions fraud, registration will continue.
- c. If admissions fraud is admitted or the Panel determines that admissions documentation is not valid and that the Registered Student, or someone acting on their behalf, has committed admissions fraud, registration may be withdrawn.

The Panel will find the allegation of admissions fraud proven if it is considered that the evidence presented identifies, on the balance of probabilities, that the Registered Student, or someone acting on their behalf, has committed admissions fraud.

The Panel will make their decision after the Fraudulent Admissions Panel meeting has taken place. The Registered Student will not be present while the Panel comes to a decision.

Once the Panel has come to a decision, the Panel will refer their decision to the Director of Student and Academic Services for consideration. The Director of Student and Academic Services will decide whether the Panel's outcome is appropriate and formally approve the decision outcome.

The decision outcome will be communicated to the Registered Student in writing within 5 working days via email to their University email address.

5.6 Actions taken if registration is withdrawn

If admissions fraud is admitted or found to be proven and the Fraudulent Admissions Panel's decision is for registration to be withdrawn, the Registered Student is not eligible for any early exit awards or transcripts of completed study. Should an award from the University have already been awarded, this may be rescinded.

From the date of the written outcome:

- The Registered Student will no longer be able to attend classes
- The Registered Student's student ID card and access to IT Services will be deactivated (normally within 24-48 hours of registration being withdrawn)
- The Division of Residential Services and Sport will be informed of the Registered Student withdrawal and, if residing in University owned or managed accommodation, formal notice will be given to vacate the accommodation (normally 28 days to vacate). Accommodation fees will be refunded for any remaining time after the keys have been returned, if appropriate.
- Tuition fees will be refunded in proportion to remainder of time on course if appropriate.
- Third parties will be notified as appropriate such as UKVI and UCAS. Where notifying the UKVI, any Student Route visa will be curtailed with 60 days' notice (the UKVI may still decide to take further action, such as applying a ban from the UK if they decide that the Registered Student used deception to obtain the visa).

5.7 Future applications to The University of Manchester

Should the Fraudulent Admissions Panel recommend that the Registered Student's registration be revoked, the Panel will also record, as part of its recommendation, whether any future application to the University from the individual would be considered.

In accordance with University procedure, future applications from individuals who have been withdrawn previously due to a fraudulent admission will normally be rejected. However, in exceptional circumstances and at the University's sole discretion, an application may be considered where:

- The individual is open and transparent about their previous conduct and provides a verified explanation of the events.
- There is credible and documented evidence of changed behaviour.

It should be noted that international applicants who have previously been withdrawn for a fraudulent admission may face significant challenges in obtaining a Student visa. As a result, the University may determine that it is unable to issue a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for any future application requiring sponsorship under the Student visa route.

6. Appeal

A Registered Student can submit an appeal against the outcome of the Fraudulent Admissions Panel's decision. The purpose of the appeal is not to consider the case afresh but to check that the Detecting and Dealing with Fraudulent Applications – Registered Students procedure has

been properly followed, and that the decision the Panel made was reasonable based on all the evidence that was available. The grounds for submitting an appeal are:

- Procedural error or irregularity in the application of the procedure. That the Detecting and Dealing with Fraudulent Applications – Registered Students procedure was not followed properly, and this has affected the outcome.
- That the decision made by the Panel was unreasonable in view of all of the circumstances and the evidence that was available at the time.
- That there is new evidence that could not be presented earlier for a good reason, and that has a material impact on the decision under appeal.

A Registered Student can submit an appeal up to 10 working days after being sent the outcome of the Fraudulent Admissions Panel's decision. Any appeal received after this time will only be considered if there is a credible and compelling reason for the delay (supported with evidence); if not, a Completion of Procedures letter will be sent to the Registered Student.

The Executive Director for the Student Experience (or someone they have nominated) will first check that the appeal has been made on an eligible ground, and if it determines that it has not, will reject the appeal and send the Registered Student a Completion of Procedures letter explaining the reason why. If they determine that the appeal has been made on an eligible ground, the appeal will be considered by a member of the University Teaching and Learning Delivery team who has had no prior involvement in the case.

During the appeal consideration, the Registered Student may be asked for further information. If they are asked for more information, they will have up to 10 working days to respond. Additional information may also be requested from the admissions team in the School/Department or Doctoral Academy, or Faculty, the DSE Student Admissions team or from other areas of the University.

The appeal outcome will either confirm the decision of the Fraudulent Admissions Panel or uphold the appeal with whatever outcome is considered appropriate. The appeal consideration will normally be completed within 20 working days. If the decision of the Fraudulent Admissions Panel is confirmed and the appeal is not upheld, the Registered Student will be sent a Completion of Procedures letter at the conclusion of the process.

Any appeal should be submitted as a written statement enclosing a copy of the Registered Student outcome letter. The appeal must detail the reasons for the appeal, the ground(s) on which it is made and enclose any new evidence (where applicable), and must be submitted to the Teaching and Learning Delivery Team (TLD-ACD@manchester.ac.uk) within 10 working days from the outcome letter. Advice on the appeals process may be sought from the Student's Union Advice Service (<https://manchesterstudentsunion.com/advice>).

7. Confidentiality

The University will have due regard towards maintaining confidentiality in relation to any allegation of admissions fraud and subsequent finding. However, in order for a case to be

considered and handled fully, the content of the allegation and end decision will need to be disclosed on a need-to-know basis to members of staff involved in putting this procedure into effect.

A copy of the admissions fraud casefile will be retained in accordance with the University's Record Retention Schedule.

8. Student Support

Registered students may seek support from appropriate sources, such as the Students' Union Advice Service (<https://manchesterstudentsunion.com/advice>), or their academic School/Department Student Support and Welfare team. More widely, registered students may access any of the support available through the University's [Student Support website](#).

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