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University of St Andrews

CROSS-FACULTY CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Academic Fraud, including Cheating in Examinations

Executive Summary

This paper presents a redrafting of the policy on academic fraud, revised to include cheating in examinations. This incorporates academic fraud when it occurs in the context of assessed coursework submitted by undergraduate students and postgraduate students on taught programmes, as well as in the context of cheating in examinations or class tests.

The School process applies to the majority of cases of fraud in submission of coursework. It is also employed to establish a *prima facie* case of cheating in an examination, leading to referral to the University Process.

The University process applied to cases of major fraud, which may be identified:

- i) at School level;
- ii) in an examination or class test;
- iii) by virtue of the fact that a previous offence has been committed.

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UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

Academic Fraud

Non-Fraudulent Inappropriate Use of Sources

A submission that is overly dependent on the work of others may not have been produced with the intent to deceive but nonetheless falls below the expectations that the University has of the academic standards of its students. This can arise, for example, from different cultural expectations about citation conventions or from a misunderstanding of the difference between collaboration and collusion. When this is detected it should not be dealt with as if it were academic fraud. Careful design of assessments and explanation of what is expected, for example in module booklets, can reduce instances of this sort of confusion.

Use of criteria for award of certain grades may also be helpful in avoiding confusion; so a clear indication can be given that excessive reliance on secondary literature, copying from other sources (even if the source is cited), or failure to cite all sources will lead to a fail grade, or that over-reliance on other work (e.g. close paraphrasing, perhaps with lack of understanding of the material) will lead to a bare pass. This should be held as distinct from fraud as defined below.

Where a grade is given that reflects a marker's belief that the work demonstrates excessive reliance on secondary sources, or poor citation behaviour, this should be stated explicitly in written feedback, and the student should be given further advice as appropriate. Where these shortcomings are thought sufficiently serious, they should be notified to the Academic Registrar, who will notify the relevant Dean of repeated occurrences of this behaviour so that the student may be given appropriate guidance in their academic study. This is distinct in purpose from the Fraud Register noted below.

Academic Fraud means *deception in an academic context*, and includes: the presentation of material as one's own when it is not one's own; the presentation of material whose provenance is academically inappropriate and cheating or other academic dishonesty in an examination or class test.

Typically, but not exclusively, fraud occurs in the submission of work for assessment. The University's policy covers frauds of this kind and other fraudulent behaviour by undergraduate or postgraduate students on taught degree programmes. It also includes deceptions committed during examinations, but not deceptions committed by research students or academic staff. Deception by any member of the University is a serious matter, but other procedures exist to deal with fraud in these areas. Academic integrity is fundamental to the values promoted by the University and examinations are a crucial method of assessment in the University of St Andrews. It is important that every student is judged on their ability, and no student is allowed unfairly to take an advantage over others, to affect the security and integrity of the examination process, or to diminish the reliability and quality of a St Andrews degree.

Deception means the submission of coursework as the product of one's own honest investigation and scholarship when it is not, or cheating in an examination. Whether the work is submitted for formative assessment (when it does not carry a mark) or for summative assessment (which is marked) is irrelevant. Definitions of cheating are outlined below.

Aiding and abetting an attempted deception is also fraud. Students proven to have been party to a fraud are normally subject to the same procedures and penalties as the student who would benefit from the fraud. This may involve writing an essay for a student or providing him or her with one gained from some other source. It may also involve collusion with another person

(whether or not a student) during an examination, or knowingly assisting any student to cheat in an examination or class test.

Categories of Fraud

There are a number of **categories of fraud**:

Plagiarism is the act of taking another's ideas and representing them as one's own. This may involve the use, without proper acknowledgement, of published or unpublished work, of work done partly or wholly by another student or of work obtained from an essay bank or a website. Plagiarism includes not just the actual copying of text *verbatim* (which may also be a breach of copyright) or close paraphrasing of text, but also the unacknowledged presentation of ideas garnered from other sources as if they were original to the author. However, where ideas are common knowledge it may be presumed that their unattributed incorporation in a submission does not constitute plagiarism.

Multiple submission is the act of submitting for assessment a piece of coursework already so submitted in another course, whether by the submitter or by another person.

Falsification is the fabrication or alteration of data in order to mislead, e.g. changing data in order to confirm a hypothesis not supported by the actual data, or the invention or deliberate fabrication of the results of an experiment which are then reported as genuine measurements.

False citation is the deceitful citing of a source for information, when the source does not contain that information.

Cheating in examinations or class tests can include (but is not restricted to) the following prohibited activities:-

- (a) taking communications equipment into the examination;
- (b) use of prohibited equipment, software or materials during the examination;
- (c) taking information (including notes in any format, books, electronically stored data or illegitimately annotated copies of dictionaries, set texts, annotations made on or concealed on parts of a student's body, etc) into the examination;
- (d) impersonation or attempted impersonation of a student eg failing to fill in attendance cards or cover sheets of scripts honestly and accurately;
- (e) providing University staff with incorrect or misleading information prior to, during or after the examination with the intention of unfairly influencing one's own performance or that of another student;
- (f) deliberate unauthorised removal of an examination script or blank examination stationery from the examination hall except by a person with designated authority to do so;
- (g) any unsupervised absence from the examination hall during the period of an examination [student(s) who have left the examination hall without permission and/or without supervision will not normally be allowed back into the hall];
- (h) unauthorised and undeclared acquisition of examination questions prior to an examination, whether or not that examination is to be sat by the student concerned;
- (i) failure to follow the rules for an examination for the purposes of gaining advantage.

How the University deals with allegations of Academic Fraud

All allegations of academic fraud will be investigated and examined following broadly similar procedures.

In all cases, students will be treated as innocent until proven guilty and investigation, adjudication and disciplinary action must be kept strictly separate. In all cases, those making the accusation will not take part in determining whether or not it is true. Training is available by SALTIRE, and where possible, staff involved in adjudication should have attended some kind of training, either as part of the original roll-out of the policy, or through sessions in individual Schools, or through staff induction sessions. Whenever a student is asked to attend any investigatory meeting or a hearing before a Board, that student has the right to be accompanied and represented by another member of the University. This representative may be a person who is either presently matriculated as a student, or is an employee of the University Court of the University of St Andrews or who is elected as a sabbatical officer of or an employee of the Students' Association of the University of St Andrews.

There are two alternative formal adjudication processes that may be used, the School Process and the University Process. The differences are outlined below, but the following stages are common to both processes.

1. The first stage is for the allegation to be documented.
 - A) In the case of a piece of submitted work where the marker is a postgraduate student, this allegation must be reported to an experienced member of academic staff, who will take responsibility for the rest of the process. Electronic means of detection may be used when appropriate.
 - B) In an examination, cheating may be detected in several ways, including:
 - In the act by an Invigilator or another member of staff; or
 - By an Examiner observing a similarity between script(s) and other material that cannot reasonably be attributed to coincidence; or
 - Through the report of another student or other individual.

In cases where the fraud is detected during the examination or class test, the procedural steps to be undertaken by the Invigilator / Examiner are outlined in Appendix I.

2. The marker / the experienced staff member involved or the Invigilator / Examiner, together with the Director of Teaching or Head of School will meet to determine whether there is a *prima facie* case for adjudication as a case of Fraud. If so, the Director of Teaching or Head of School must then consult the Academic Registrar on whether or not a previous case of fraud has been proven against the student in question. If not, and yet the School regards the alleged fraud as a major one, it must apply to the Dean for permission to use the University Process. The grounds on which these decisions are made are outlined below. If the offence is a first offence, and if the Dean does not agree that it is major it must be considered within the School.
3. Once the appropriate Process has been agreed, a Board of Adjudication, one of whose members acts as convener, is appointed. The convener will arrange a hearing at which the investigating staff member, Examiner or Invigilator will present evidence. The student concerned must be invited in writing to attend the hearing, and with at least three working

- days' notice. She or he must be informed in advance that the meeting concerns academic fraud and to which module or examination / class test it refers. The student shall have the right to challenge any evidence presented and to present evidence. The Board may also ask markers and tutors concerned to give evidence, and may seek advice from others within and outwith the University. If a student fails to attend without good cause, the Board may choose to proceed.
4. All who are not members of the Board will withdraw while the Board seeks to establish whether or not an offence has taken place. If the Board is not convinced that there was any evidence of fraud, then the case must be dismissed. If the Board does believe a case has been proven, it will make a recommendation to the Dean regarding which penalty would be appropriate. The Dean will ordinarily accept the recommendation but exceptionally may intervene if the penalty seems inappropriate.
 5. The student shall be informed in writing by the convener of the Board, within five working days, of the Board's recommendation i.e. whether she or he has been found guilty, has been exonerated, or whether the case has been referred to the major fraud process, or back to the School process. When a letter informs a student that he or she has been found guilty, the same letter should give details of the appropriate appeals process. A right of appeal exists against any Board's decision, on grounds of procedural irregularity or bias in relation to the conduct of the initial investigation. Appeals must be made to the Dean within seven days of the receipt of the written outcome of the investigation.
 6. After any guilty verdict has been reached, the convener will submit to the Academic Registrar a brief report of the case using the pro forma attached (Appendix II). This report will detail the student's name, the nature of the fraud and the penalty recommended.

How the two Processes Differ

The School Process shall be used for what appears to be fraud so long as it is a first offence, and made prior to the award of a degree or diploma.

- A. Most cases of fraud perpetrated in the submission of coursework will probably be dealt with by this procedure. Each will be heard by a Board of Adjudication made up of two or more members of academic staff appointed by the Head of School. Teaching Fellows will not normally be involved in this capacity. A member of academic staff, the module co-ordinator or School Examinations Officer, will have the responsibility for conducting an investigation and presenting evidence to the Board.
- B. In the School Process the Board will recommend to the Head of School an appropriate penalty. If the Board feels that a Major Fraud has been committed, they may, with the consent of the Head of School, refer it to the University Process. Possible penalties are listed below.
- C. Appeals against the Board's decision, on the grounds of bias and prejudice, procedural irregularity, or information not available at the time of the original decision, should be made to the relevant Dean, who will investigate the case under the terms of the Code of Practice on Appeals and Complaints.

The University Process will be used for what appears to be Major Fraud, for allegations made subsequent to the award of a diploma or degree, and for alleged second and subsequent frauds.

- A. Some first offences are so serious that they must be considered by the University Process. It is difficult to define a clear boundary between Fraud and Major Fraud in a way that makes sense for all subjects and disciplines but a good rule of thumb is that a case can be considered as Major Fraud if one or more of the following apply:
- More than half of a piece of work submitted for assessment has been plagiarised.
 - The core ideas and arguments have been plagiarised.
 - Data that are central to a piece of assessed work have been substantially falsified.
 - A deliberate and pre-meditated attempt has been made to use prohibited or unauthorised material in an examination or class test.
 - Loss of Permission to Proceed (the maximum penalty available to the School process) is deemed to be an inadequate penalty.

If a School suspects a Major Fraud has taken place, it must apply to the Deans to make use of the University Process. The Deans may, if they feel the fraud is not a major one, require the case to be dealt with by the School Process.

- B. Any fraud or accusation of cheating or other academic dishonesty in an examination or class test alleged against a student or former student who has already been awarded a diploma or degree partly on the basis of the work in question must be considered by the University Process. Allegations of Academic Fraud may be investigated up to one year after the conferment of an award. Schools will need to retain all pertinent assessment material for a period of two years following the Examinations Board meeting that considers classification.
- C. If a fraud is alleged against a student who has already been convicted of academic fraud in this University, the School must refer it to the University Process however minor the nature of the fraud.

In the University Process the Board of Adjudication will consist of three or more members nominated by the Deans of Arts and Science from experienced staff across the University. Each Board will include one male and one female staff member, and members drawn from two or more Faculties. The School against which the fraud was allegedly perpetrated will not be represented on the panel. One member will be appointed as convener, and will be responsible for all the arrangements relating to the consideration and conduct of the investigation, up to and including presenting a report of the result. The Board will hear evidence submitted by the School concerned. The Board will need to be aware that a high degree of certainty is necessary in imposing penalties of the gravity which are allowed. When it has reached a verdict the Board (through the convener) will submit to the Deans a verdict and, in the case of guilty verdicts, a recommended penalty.

Penalties for Fraud in Coursework - the School Process

The *maximum* penalty that may be imposed by the School Process will be the loss of PTP for the module concerned. Lesser penalties may include a verbal warning, instruction to resubmit a piece of coursework, or a mark of zero for the piece of coursework concerned.

Penalties for Cheating in an Examination or class test - the School Process

The School process is normally used to establish a prima facie case for referral to the University Process. Penalties for Cheating in examinations will always be dealt with by the University Process.

Penalties for Fraud in Coursework - the University Process

The recommended tariff of penalties for the Major Case process follows; Boards may reduce the penalty if in their judgement it would be appropriate to do so, but may exceed the penalty only upon application to the Dean.

1. Fraud relating to up to half of the continually assessed work for a module, or a third of the total assessment of the module, either as a first offence, or with genuine mitigating circumstances
⇒ Loss of Permission to Proceed.
2. Fraud relating to over half of the continually assessed work for a module, or over a third of the total assessment of the module, or after previous offences, or without genuine mitigating circumstances.
⇒ Loss of Permission to Proceed and a suspension for one or two semesters from the University
3. Fraud relating to over three-quarters of the assessment of a module at Honours.
⇒ Loss of Permission to Proceed in an Honours module and no right to substitute a further module (which would effectively confine the student to graduating with a General Degree)
4. Persistent and repeated offences.
⇒ Termination of Studies.

Penalties – Cheating in an Examination or class test investigated by the University Process

The School Process should recommend a penalty, which the University Process will decide through a Board of Adjudication.

An indication of possible penalties for the Major Case process follows; Boards may reduce the penalty if in their judgement it would be appropriate to do so, but may exceed the penalty only upon application to the Dean.

1. The student be awarded a mark of zero for the examination with the right to reassessment.
2. The student be awarded a mark of zero for the examination without the right to reassessment but with permission to take an alternative module in the following session for credit only.
3. The student be awarded a mark of zero for the examination without the right to reassessment but with permission to take another module in the following session for completion of a general degree only.
4. The student be awarded a mark of zero for the examination without the right to

reassessment and with no right to take another module in the following session for credit only.

5. The student's programme of study be terminated, in the case of a repeated premeditated offence.

Lesser penalties will include all those available to School Boards of Adjudication on Academic Fraud in coursework.

Academic Fraud in Coursework

The Board is also empowered, if it sees fit, to order investigations into work submitted for other modules for evidence of fraud by requiring work to be presented and reassessed. On the basis of adjudication of those investigations, it may remove more than one PP and / or delete the credits for more than one module.

Cheating in Examinations

In cases of cheating in an examination or class test, the Board may also consider a profile of the student's work performance to date in examinations and assessed work. If the student has been found guilty previously of academic fraud or of cheating in an examination, this will be made known to the Committee through the central register maintained by the Academic Registrar.

Appeals

Appeals against the decision of the Board and the Deans must be submitted to the Academic Registrar and will be considered by a University Appeals Committee in accordance with the current Code of Practice on Student Complaints, Appeals and Discipline.

Record Keeping and Anonymity

The University needs to keep some records of investigations into academic fraud. The main objects of record keeping are to allow identification of repeat offenders, and to allow the efficiency of the University's procedures to be monitored. Records help the University identify long term trends, for instance as part of academic audit. A record of past decisions helps Board members to determine appropriate penalties, and so to ensure that similar offences attract similar penalties from one School to another. A record of decisions made also assists SALTIRE in training academic staff to sit on Boards of Adjudication.

The University is sensitive, however, of its responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and also of the principles enshrined in its Student Confidentiality policy.

Records of convictions for academic fraud will be kept as a password-protected "Register" by the Academic Registrar on the basis of reports of substantiated investigations submitted by the conveners of Boards of Adjudication. This record will include the following information:

Student Name; Student ID; School; Module(s) concerned; Offence; Date of consideration; Members of Board of Adjudication; Outcome.

Only the Academic Registrar will have access to the full record and will use this only to assist Directors of Teaching in identifying repeat offenders. Names will be removed from the Register one year after graduation. This information will be made available on request to Pro-

Deans who are asked to provide references for students.

The Academic Registrar will produce annual monitoring reports for Deans, the TLA and Academic Audit providing information on how many cases had been dealt with during the year, the Schools involved, a summary of offences and a summary of outcomes. All monitoring would be anonymised and would not identify individual cases. Anonymised case material would also be made available to SALTIRE for training purposes.

In cases that result in the exoneration of a student accused of academic fraud, no record shall be kept of the accusation. In cases of students who stay on at the institution to undertake a further degree programme after graduation, their record shall be "cleared" from the central register.

Procedural steps to be undertaken by the Invigilator / Examiner in cases where the fraud is detected during the examination or class test

If an Invigilator has reason to suspect one or more students of cheating, supplying information or other irregular behaviour he/she should call on a second Invigilator and the University Examinations Officer to observe the student(s) before intervening at the end of the examination. At the end of the examination the Invigilator, together with at least one of the other observers, should:-

- (a) speak to the student(s) concerned informing him/her of their suspicions and that he/she will be reported to the Head of School for suspected cheating or other irregular behaviour as the case may be;
- (b) remove and retain any prohibited material, if possible - and in the case of a refusal by the student(s) to hand over such materials, formally to record the refusal and any grounds given;
- (c) in cases where it is believed that relevant materials are written upon or concealed upon parts of a student's body, undertake the following procedures: the Invigilator should take the student to a private place to meet with two senior members of the University staff of the same gender as the student, the two senior members of staff should be as specific as possible about what they wish to see, and a refusal by the student should be formally recorded along with a statement of the grounds for refusal;
- (d) note the student(s)' name, matriculation number, the module, time and location of the incident.

Within 24 hours of the examination the Chief Invigilator must submit a formal report to the Head of School (signed, dated and copied to the University Examinations Officer). In the case of cheating detected in the examination hall, the report will outline the circumstances of the incident. It must:-

- (a) where possible, identify all students involved and the degree of alleged culpability of each;
- (b) describe and, if possible, provide the evidence on which the suspicion is based, including a photocopy of the examination script;
- (c) contain details of the use of any materials brought into the examination hall in contravention of the *Examination Rules for Candidates* and *Examination Use of Dictionaries* (whether inadvertently or deliberately);
- (d) provide written statements from the other staff observers of the incident and the names of any students or others who may corroborate the suspicions.

Where a student(s) is obtaining information from another, the Invigilator should try to determine, where possible, whether the latter was an unintentional participant, was acting under duress, or was freely collaborating in the supply of information.

The anonymised script(s) will be sent to the School by the Departmental Representative to be internally marked. Once a mark has been given, the Examiner will then be asked to review the mark based on the report submitted by the Chief Invigilator. The Examiner will report to Head of School on the extent to which any unauthorised material was relevant to the examination and whether it appears to have been used by the student(s).

In cases where a suspicion of cheating arises in the first instance from an Examiner, rather than an Invigilator, the Examiner should report in writing without delay to the Head of School the

following: the nature of the suspicion, the names of all students suspected of being involved, the evidence upon which the suspicion is based, and any corroborating evidence.

The Head of School will receive all such reports and convene a School Panel of Enquiry. The Panel will determine whether there is *prima facie* evidence of a breach of the examination regulations. If there is no such evidence the Convener of the Panel may recommend that the matter be regarded as closed, and will inform the student(s) in writing accordingly. In cases of immediate admission of guilt, there is no requirement to convene a School Panel of Enquiry but the Head of School would be required to refer the case to the University Adjudication Board.

In light of the investigation and if there is *prima facie* evidence of a breach of the regulations, then within five working days of the allegation being made, the Convener of the Panel shall write to the student(s) outlining:-

- (a) details of the allegation;
- (b) the decision to refer the case to the University process for consideration;
- (c) that the student(s) has the opportunity to set out his or her case in person or in writing to the University Adjudication Board and, if in person, to be accompanied by another member of the University;
- (d) that in the event of the allegation being upheld, any appeal arising from the decision of the University Adjudication Board may be lodged, within one month, to the Senate in accordance with the *Code of Practice on Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline*.

In exceptional circumstances, allegations may be considered by the University Adjudication Board in the student(s)' absence. Students who are unable to or choose not to attend may send a written statement.

The examination paper, script and any unauthorised material will be made available to the Adjudication Board, along with the initial letter to the Head of School by the Invigilator or Examiner who reported the suspicion of cheating. All those who observed the alleged cheating may be asked to attend the Adjudication Board meeting.

Academic Fraud

Student's Name:

Matriculation No:

Module Number(s):

Module Title(s):

Date of Hearing/Meeting with Student:

Details of all attending:

Nature of the Academic Fraud:

Penalty:

Name of Member of Staff making the report:

Date:

Appeals against this decision may be made in writing to the relevant Dean within x days of the date of the notification of the result of the Hearing/Meeting. All appeals will be dealt with in accordance with the University *Code of Practice on Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline*.

Please return this form to the Academic Registrar within 3 working days of the decision being made.