

UWE Assessment Offence Policy

1. Academic Integrity

G1.1 The University values a culture of honest and mutual trust (Academic Integrity), and expects all members of the University to respect and uphold these core values.

(Academic Regulations and Procedures)

Every student of the University is expected to act with integrity in relation to the production and representation of academic work and in acknowledging the contributions of others in their work.

1.2 The University's approach to academic integrity is to foster and facilitate good academic practice, providing practical guidance to students to help them develop learning skills that will enable them to reference their work correctly and to avoid unintentional plagiarism (see measures outlined below). Where assessed work is found to display poor levels of scholarship advice and support will be offered.

1.3 However the University expects students to take care to follow the appropriate conventions and standards for academic practice in their subject discipline as may be defined in module / programme handbooks, assignment briefs and other guidance provided by programme/award staff. Work that does not meet appropriate or acceptable standards of academic practice in this respect may leave the student open to action under the regulations of the University relating to assessment offences.

2. Assessment Offences

2.1 The University takes the investigation of all alleged assessment offences seriously. It is an assessment offence for a candidate to commit any act designed to obtain for him or herself an unfair advantage with a view to achieving a higher grade or mark than they would otherwise secure (Academic Regulations and Procedures). Behaviour that constitutes an assessment offence in the context of this policy statement includes but is not limited to:

Plagiarism

"Passing off someone else's work whether intentionally or unintentionally as your own, for your own benefit"
(Carroll, J. (2002))

Collusion

"Working together to produce assessed work in circumstances where this is forbidden."
(Barrett & Cox (2005)).

Further examples of plagiarism and/or collusion are illustrated at Appendix A.

2.2 The University's Academic Regulations and Procedures provide full details of how alleged assessment offences will be investigated and of the range of penalties that may be imposed where cases are proven; these may be accessed via the following link: [Academic Regulations and Procedures](#), however a diagrammatic summary of the investigative process is attached at Appendix B. Students found to have committed an assessment offence may also be required to undertake supplementary academic integrity training to help them improve their academic practice in addition to any other penalty that may be imposed by the Executive Dean.

3. Responsibilities of the University

3.1 The University will foster good academic practice and support student learning by:

- i) Ensuring that students are provided with appropriate information about plagiarism and other assessment offences and how to avoid committing them through pre-registration information, student handbooks, published and on-line information and policies and other appropriate documents;
- ii) Raising awareness of plagiarism during initial induction sessions;
- iii) Providing opportunities for academic integrity training for all students, including on-line training for new students at the start of their studies intended to help them avoid plagiarism and other assessment offences during their academic career;
- iv) Raising the awareness of staff about the various education, social and cultural backgrounds of the student community in line with the University's internationalisation strategy by making available on-line training opportunities in intercultural communication;
- v) Providing staff access to electronic text-matching/plagiarism detection systems as appropriate and by regularly monitoring and reviewing their use;
- vi) Investigating all suspected assessment offences with regard to the principles of natural justice and the Academic Regulatory Framework and policies of the University, and ensuring that the interests of any student alleged to have committed an assessment offence are reasonably and fairly taken into account;
- vii) Monitoring the incidence of assessment offences throughout the University on an annual basis and using this data to inform the development of learning, teaching and assessment strategies and practice.

4. Responsibilities of Faculties, Schools and/or Departments

4.1 Faculties and/or Departments will:

- i) Provide students with information and guidance on appropriate systems of reference and acceptable/unacceptable practices specific to their subject disciplines e.g. via programme handbooks, module guides, when setting assignment briefs or other appropriate sources;
- ii) Provide opportunities for academic integrity and skills training for students eg *myskills* site and Library-led workshops which will include material on identifying and avoiding plagiarism and on the referencing and citation conventions appropriate to their subject discipline;
- iii) Promote good learning, teaching and assessment practices to minimise the occurrence of plagiarism e.g. in 'designing out' plagiarism in the development of new programmes, learning outcomes and assessment methods;
- iv) Investigate alleged assessment offences in a timely fashion and in accordance with the University's Academic Regulatory Framework.
- v) Appoint Assessment Offence Advisers who will:
 - Provide advice to staff members where cases of plagiarism or other assessment offences are suspected, facilitating the identification of instances of poor scholarship which will not proceed to the assessment offence investigative process;
 - Oversee arrangements for providing guidance, support and/or further training to students in instances of poor scholarship;
 - Compile information and evidence about specific alleged assessment offences to facilitate investigation by the Executive Dean;
 - Provide informal advice about the implications and possible outcomes of the process of academic procedures to students accused of plagiarism and other assessment offences and provide details of any other sources of support or counselling available to them e.g. via the Students Union;
 - Take an active role within the Department to identify and promote good practice and staff development in relation to the detection and deterrence of plagiarism and other assessment offences including the use of text-matching/detection software;
 - Identify emerging issues and trends in assessment offence monitoring data and promulgate suitable actions arising from them;

5. Responsibilities of the Student

5.1 Students are expected to:

- i) Undertake assessment and submit assignments in accordance with the Academic Regulatory Framework and policies of the University;
- ii) Be responsible for their own work, avoid plagiarism and other assessment offences, and not knowingly allow others to commit plagiarism or collusion by copying/using their work in breach of academic regulations and procedures;
- iii) Avail themselves of the information and training opportunities provided by the University aimed at developing their understanding of academic practice and skills such as referencing, citation, paraphrasing and compiling a bibliography.

6. The use of text-matching and plagiarism detection software

6.1 The University has the general right to test for plagiarism and other assessment offences as part of its assessment of student work and may subject work to scrutiny using text-matching or plagiarism detection software as appropriate, on either a comprehensive or sample basis. The University will make available to staff suitable software for this purpose as it deems appropriate.

6.2 Students will be informed when this is to be the case through appropriate mechanisms such as module/programme handbooks, particular assignment briefs, or directly by module tutors.

6.3 Faculties will determine when, how and the extent to which the software shall be used locally and will be responsible for providing appropriate training/guidance to staff involved in its use. This use may include but is not limited to:

- Electronic submission of student work (with or without an accompanying hard copy) and in accordance with UWE on-line submission and anonymity policies, to be uploaded to plagiarism software by staff for checking on a comprehensive or sample basis;
- Electronic submission of student work (with or without accompanying hardcopy) and in accordance with UWE on-line submission and anonymity policies, through Blackboard allowing automatic checking by plagiarism software for use by staff on a comprehensive or sample basis .

It is important to note that the use of electronic detection software in this way is seen only as an adjunct to the normal exercise of academic judgement not as a replacement for it, and thus its use will remain optional.

6.4 Additionally academic staff may choose to make the outcome reports from plagiarism software scrutiny available to students whether in draft or final format to be used as part of formative feedback to the student, or as a learning tool to improve the student's understanding of acceptable and unacceptable academic practice in areas such as referencing, paraphrasing and citation.

6.5 Where an assessment offence is suspected in a particular piece of work it may be scrutinised using electronic detection software and/or other search engines without first informing the student. However the student will be informed subsequently that this process has taken place and should there be a case to answer will be able to view the outcome report of the scrutiny as part of the evidence gathered during investigation of the case in the normal way.

7. Postgraduate Research Students

7.1 This policy also applies for students registered on postgraduate research programmes of study. Please see the University regulations and procedures for further information.

References

BARRETT, R. and COX, A L. (2005). 'At least they're learning something: the hazy line between collaboration and collusion.' *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30(2), pp. 107-122.

CARROLL, J. (2002.9). 'A Handbook for deterring plagiarism in Higher Education'. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.

FISHMAN, T. (2011). 'Integrity and incongruity in an increasingly integrated world'. The fifth ASKe conference on Institutional policies and procedures for managing student plagiarism, Oxford Brookes University, 9 June 2011.

Appendix A - Examples of unacceptable academic practice with regard to plagiarism, collusion and other assessment offences

1. Plagiarism

When “someone uses words, ideas, or work products that are attributable to another identifiable person or source without attributing the work to the source from which it was obtained,

In a situation where there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship,

In order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain,” (Fishman 2011)

- Copying more than a single phrase from another person’s work without the use of quotation marks or acknowledgement of the sources;
- Summarising another person’s work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without acknowledgement;
- Paraphrasing material from a source without acknowledging the original author;
- Using someone else’s ideas without acknowledgement of the source or by pretending they are your own;
- Copying another student’s work with or without their knowledge or agreement (this may also be deemed as collusion)
- Downloading material from the web and submitting it as your own work;
- Using course notes without referencing.
- Self-Plagiarism - students may not re-use work (or a substantial part of it) that has previously been submitted for a different assessment for which credit has been awarded.

2. Collusion

- Submitting entirely as your own, work done in collaboration with another person(s), with intention to gain unfair advantage;
- Collaborating with another person in the completion of work which is intended to be submitted as that other person’s own unaided work;
- Knowingly permitting another person to copy all or part of your work and submit it as their own unaided work.

NB. This is not an exhaustive list

The following are also assessment offences:

3. Contract Cheating

- Submitting as your own, work which has been produced in whole or part by another person on your behalf, e.g. by using a ‘ghost writing’ service, essay mill or similar.
- Deliberately making available, or seeking to make available material to another student (of this university or elsewhere) whether in exchange for financial gain or otherwise with the intention that the material is used by the other student to engage in unacceptable academic practice/assessment offences.

4. Falsification

- Falsifying or misrepresenting the results of experimentation/research data;
- Falsifying references, bibliography or laboratory reports or projects by claiming they are a result of your own work.

5. Fabrication

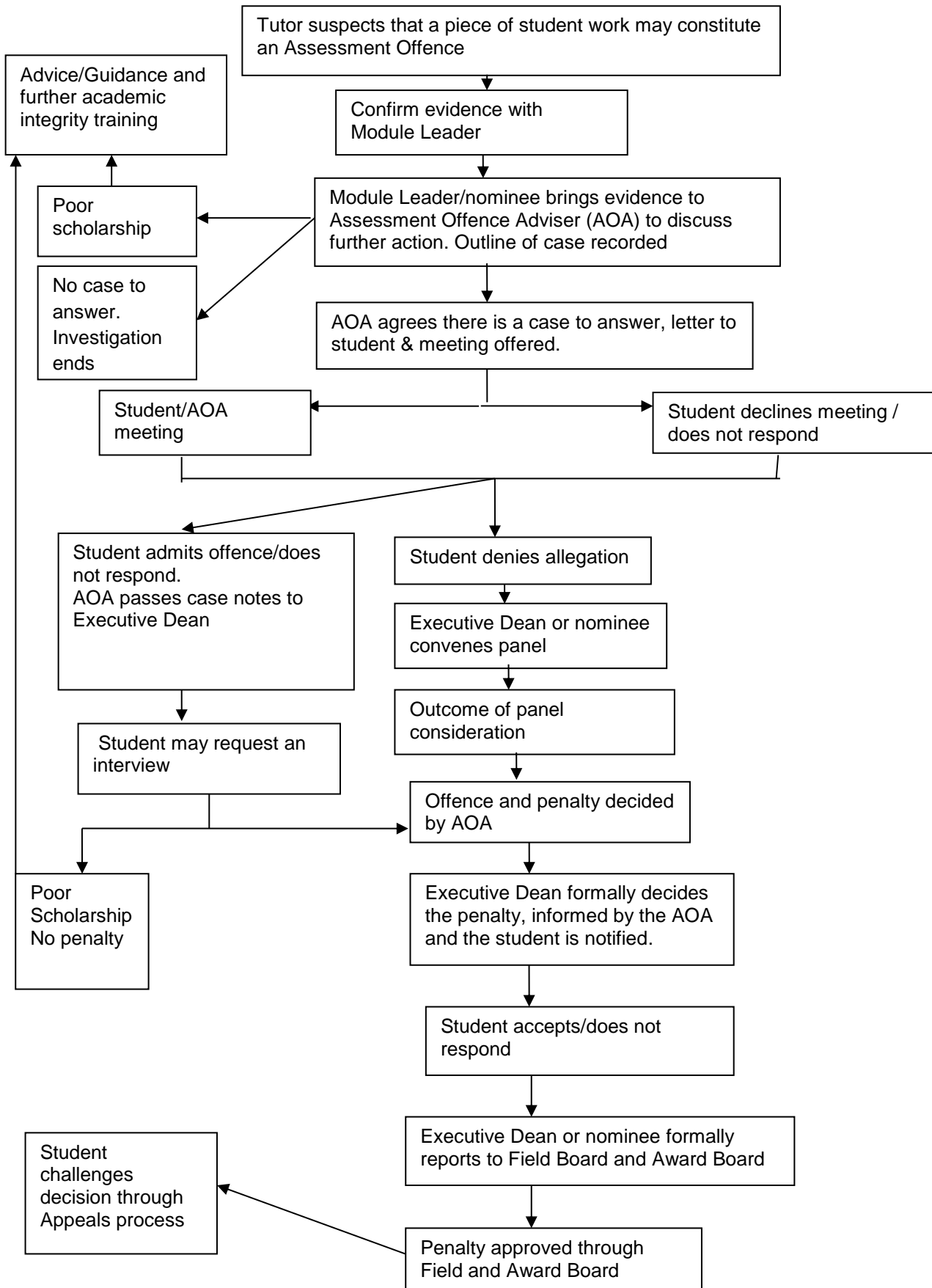
Reporting on experiments/research never performed or data never collected.

6. Cheating or intent to cheat

- Found with notes in an examination
- Retaining mobile phone, smartphone or similar device within an examination

NB. This is not an exhaustive list

Appendix B - Assessment Offences – diagrammatic summary of investigative procedures



Appendix C – Assessment offence penalties

Summary of applicable penalties for proven assessment offence cases at undergraduate and postgraduate taught level.

Offence deemed	Offence committed	Normal penalty to be applied
First and lesser offence*	Poor scholarship	Meeting with assessment officer and a 'technical offence' is noted on ISIS – no penalty – check mark given has taken account of poor scholarship
	Evidence shows plagiarism, cheating or collusion	the assessment (element) mark is reduced to 0
Second and lesser offence*	Evidence shows plagiarism, cheating or collusion	assessment (element) reduced to 0 and referred in component
First and serious offence*	Evidence shows plagiarism, cheating or collusion	assessment (element) reduced to 0 and referred in component
Second/Subsequent* and serious	Evidence shows plagiarism, cheating or collusion	assessment (component) reduced to 0 plus no resit opportunities or further attempts

Alleged assessment offences identified in assignments which were submitted in parallel will normally be processed as one assessment offence.

Guidance to inform a serious offence outcome

Key issues which should be considered when deciding an appropriate penalty for a serious offence are;

- Intent to deceive
- Volume of plagiarism detected
- Size of assessment e.g. final year project dissertation or standard assignment weighting
- Level of module e.g. level 3/M and the amount of previous study skill support having been undertaken

* Aggravating factors include, but are not limited to, behaviour such as accusing another innocent student of complicity or other involvement. These factors should be taken into account when deciding on an appropriate penalty.

Summary of applicable penalties for proven assessment offence cases in MPhil and doctoral level awards

The penalty tariff is designed with due regard to:

- the intent to deceive;
- the proportion of the material affected;
- the level of study;
- the amount of previous skills support training having been undertaken.

Offence deemed	Offence committed	Normal penalty to be applied
Poor scholarship	Incomplete, inaccurate or missing citation in a small number of instances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of areas for concern are included in written feedback and sent to both the candidate and the Director of Studies (DoS), who must meet to agree a plan of action to improve the candidate's understanding of good academic practice. • All examples must be rectified within the work concerned. • Poor scholarship within a thesis submitted for final examination will be raised as part of the viva process and will require correction and/or amendment as appropriate. • Incident will not be recorded on the student ISIS record.
First and lesser offence (Not applicable for offences found in a thesis submitted for final examination)	Evidence shows plagiarism or other assessment offence of a minor nature in terms of volume and of little significance to the overall piece of work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FRDC Chair issues a formal written warning to the candidate copied to the DoS, advising that further offences will be deemed 'serious' and may result in a severe penalty being applied from the range described. • The offence is recorded on the student ISIS record. • Candidate and DoS must meet to agree an action plan as above which will be subject to FRDC scrutiny. • All examples must be rectified within the work concerned.
All other offences including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First and serious offence; • Second/subsequent offences; • All offences detected within the thesis after its submission for final examination. 	Evidence shows plagiarism or other assessment offence that is: <p>Substantive but not key to the overall piece of work or thesis;</p> <p>or</p> <p>Substantive and central to the piece of work or thesis;</p> <p>or</p> <p>Amounts to a considerable portion of the piece of work or thesis.</p> <p>or</p> <p>The candidate has committed a second/subsequent offence, where previously found guilty of a first offence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate is required to resubmit the work or thesis in a manner and within a timescale approved by RDAB; <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate is required to withdraw and their registration is terminated, no further resubmission permitted, they will not qualify for the award on which they are registered; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In all cases the offence will be recorded on the student ISIS record and included in future academic references.

Review of the Policy

This policy was approved in July 2014 and remains in effect for the current academic year.

Version 3 10th July 2014

Academic Services