

Academic Misconduct Policy

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1. Purpose

- 1.1. This policy sets out the approach for the School of Professional Studies (SPS) to maintaining academic integrity and addressing academic misconduct.
- 1.2. SPS is committed to ensuring that all students uphold the highest standards of honesty and integrity in their academic work.
- 1.3. This policy supports the maintenance of academic standards, protects the value of qualifications awarded, and ensures fairness for all students.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to:
 - All students enrolled at SPS
 - All forms of assessment, including coursework, examinations, presentations, practical assessments, dissertations, and research outputs
 - Conduct occurring on-campus, online, or in any environment related to academic activity

3. Plagiarism Detection

- 3.1. SPS is a member of the Turnitin UK Service and uses this service to aid in the detection Academic Misconduct.
- 3.2. All student work is uploaded to the Turnitin system, which compares the document against a database of billions of internet pages, previous student papers and journals (amongst others).
- 3.3. Turnitin provides an Originality Report for every document uploaded to it, which shows the extent of similarity with other sources.
- 3.4. Plagiarism detection is not limited to the use of Turnitin. Tutors also will look to evidence of the following:
 - Plagiarism from published texts (not necessarily available online)
 - Similarities with the work of other students which can suggest collusion
 - Content that appears to be clearly beyond the known capabilities of a student
 - Work that is expressed through a style which does not match the known writing or language abilities of a student

4. Types of Academic Misconduct

- 4.1. Academic misconduct refers to any action or attempted action that may result in a student gaining an unfair academic advantage.

Plagiarism

- 4.2. Plagiarism is submitting the work or ideas of somebody else as your own, without appropriate referencing. Examples include, but aren't limited to:
- Copying sections from one or more books / articles / other published sources without acknowledgement of the source(s). It is still plagiarism if you reproduce sections from several sources instead of one
 - Excessive dependence upon one or a limited number of sources is plagiarism if the sources are inadequately referenced, whether or not the original text has been paraphrased
 - Copying from other members while working with a group
 - Submitting your own previous work (in whole or in part) from another course/module, whether or not this is from a different institution, often known as 'self-plagiarism' or 'double counting'
 - Submitting the work of any third party, including students and former students

Impersonation

- 4.3. Impersonation is submitting work prepared by another person for assessment purposes. Examples include, but aren't limited to:
- Purchasing essays
 - Writing an assessment for another student

Collusion

- 4.4. Collusion is the failure to work independently, where this is often required, and showing the work off as your own individual effort.
- 4.5. Students should note that collusion is different to collaboration and a few assignments may specify that students should work together and submit joint work. Students should never submit joint work unless it is clearly stated as a requirement in the module's written documentation, and, in such cases, students should seek clarification from their tutors as to the level of collaboration that is acceptable.
- 4.6. All students implicated during a case of collusion will be considered as having breached Academic Practice, even when one student is believed to possess copies from another. This is

often the result of not adequately securing your work or sharing / showing someone else your work that can make you culpable for collusion.

- 4.7. Only where students can provide clear proof that their work has been stolen or otherwise acquired without their consent, may then be exonerated from the accusation of collusion.

Exam Misconduct

- 4.8. Exam misconduct involves breaching exam regulations to get an unfair advantage. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Use of unauthorised technology during the exam
- Use of unauthorised notes / other help material
- Refusing to handover your paper at the given time
- Impersonation in exams

Falsification

- 4.9. Falsification involves submitting data, observations or other research in assessed work which has been either fabricated or falsified.

5. Investigation Procedures

- 5.1. Where there is a suspicion of academic misconduct, this will be reported to the relevant Programme Leader at the earliest opportunity. The Programme Leader will be responsible for initiating an investigation that is proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the allegation.
- 5.2. We will notify the individual or individuals concerned in writing, normally by email, as soon as reasonably practicable. This notification will set out the nature of the alleged academic misconduct and will outline the potential consequences should the allegation be upheld following investigation.
- 5.3. The investigation will proceed through the following stages:

Stage one

- 5.4. A preliminary investigation will be undertaken by the Programme Leader in order to determine whether there is sufficient evidence for the allegation to proceed to formal consideration.
- 5.5. Where plagiarism or collusion is suspected, the Programme Leader may require the student to participate in a viva voce examination to assess subject knowledge and understanding in relation to the submitted work. Any such viva will be conducted by an appropriately

qualified member of academic staff with relevant subject expertise. A written report of the viva will be produced and submitted to the Programme Leader for consideration as part of the investigation.

- 5.6. Where an allegation of academic misconduct is raised against a member of staff, any assessment activity relating to that staff member's work will be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation. In such cases, consideration will be given by the Human Resources function as to whether the matter should be managed under the Staff Disciplinary Procedure.
- 5.7. Where the preliminary investigation finds that there is insufficient evidence to support the allegation, the work will be marked and processed in accordance with SPS's normal Assessment Regulations.
- 5.8. Where the preliminary investigation concludes that there is sufficient evidence to support the allegation proceeding, the Programme Leader will prepare a written report outlining the findings for submission to the Academic Misconduct Panel, or to the Human Resources function where staff are involved. The student will be formally notified in writing and will be given an opportunity to respond to the allegation within ten working days of receipt of the notification. This communication will include a copy of the allegation and supporting evidence, a copy of this policy, and details of the process for requesting a review of any subsequent decision.
- 5.9. Any representations submitted by the student will be taken into account prior to a final decision being made. Where a student fails to submit a response within the specified timeframe, a decision may be made based on the available evidence, and where appropriate, the allegation may be upheld and a penalty applied.
- 5.10. Throughout the investigation process, the student will be afforded the opportunity to respond to the allegation. Within ten working days of receiving notification of the alleged academic misconduct, the student must respond in writing, providing any supporting evidence where applicable, and indicating clearly whether they accept the allegation, dispute the allegation, and/or wish to have any mitigating circumstances taken into consideration in relation to potential sanctions, such as duress or coercion by another student.

Valid/Invalid response

- 5.11. Where a student submits a response to an allegation of academic misconduct, they are required to clearly set out the grounds on which their response is based and provide any relevant supporting evidence. Submissions that do not adequately explain the basis of the student's response may be considered invalid at the discretion of the Programme Leader.
- 5.12. In such circumstances, the student will be notified in writing and the absence of a valid response may result in the allegation being treated as accepted.

- 5.13. Where a student fails to respond within the specified timeframe, they will be deemed to have accepted the allegation. In such cases, the Academic Misconduct Panel, or other designated decision-making body, may proceed to determine the appropriate category of academic misconduct and apply a proportionate sanction in accordance with SPS regulations.
- 5.14. The student will be informed in writing of the outcome of the Panel's decision. Where notification is sent by post, it will be deemed to have been received on the second working day following posting. Where notification is sent by email, it will be deemed to have been received on the day of transmission.

Stage Two

- 5.15. Where a student disputes an allegation of academic misconduct, the Academic Misconduct Panel will consider the allegation alongside all supporting evidence and the student's written submission.
- 5.16. The Panel will determine whether, on the balance of probabilities, the evidence is sufficient to substantiate the allegation.
- 5.17. Where a student accepts the allegation, fails to respond within the specified timeframe, or where the Panel concludes that the allegation is proven, the Panel will take into account any mitigating circumstances or supporting evidence submitted by the student prior to making a decision on the appropriate penalty. Sanctions will be applied in accordance with the relevant section of this procedure.
- 5.18. Where the Programme Leader's report, together with any response provided by the student, indicates that academic misconduct has occurred, the Panel will refer to the relevant section of this procedure in determining the appropriate sanction.
- 5.19. All stages of the investigation and decision-making process will be fully documented by the individual responsible for managing the case, ensuring an accurate record of actions taken and decisions reached.
- 5.20. The student will be formally notified of the outcome of the process and will be informed of the procedures available for appealing any decision made in relation to the allegation.

6. Penalties

- 6.1. The penalty imposed for academic misconduct will be determined in accordance with the seriousness of the offence, taking into account all relevant circumstances, including the stage of the student's programme of study.
- 6.2. In the early stages of study, instances of poor academic practice, plagiarism, or cheating may be considered in the context of the student's development of appropriate academic skills and understanding. However, in later stages of study, similar behaviour will normally be regarded

more seriously and is likely to result in more severe penalties, which may include module failure or exclusion from the programme. The student's previous record of academic conduct will also be taken into consideration when determining an appropriate outcome.

- 6.3. Any second or subsequent finding of academic misconduct will normally be treated as serious academic misconduct unless there is clear and compelling evidence of mitigating circumstances.
- 6.4. Where cheating, plagiarism, or any other form of academic misconduct has been substantiated, a report will be submitted to the relevant Examination Board or Progression Board for consideration in relation to the student's academic standing and progression.

Minor Misconduct

- 6.5. The penalties that may be imposed in relation to proven Minor Misconduct are as follows:
- The student is warned, and a record of the warning will remain on the student's file indefinitely
 - The element(s) of assessment is failed. The student may have the opportunity to re-sit the assessment, capped at a bare pass
 - Failure in the element(s) of assessment, and the module is capped at a bare pass

Major Misconduct

- 6.6. Where Major Misconduct is proven, the Panel may, in addition to the penalties set out in above, consider the application of the following penalties:
- Failure in the module. The student must re-register for the same module at the next opportunity where the re-registered module result will be capped at a bare pass. Where a re- registration of the same module, or suitable alternative, is not permissible, the student will not be able to continue on the course
 - Recommendation to the appropriate Examination Board that the final classification of any award be downgraded by one level
 - Expulsion, which will be automatic where two or more penalties for Major Misconduct are imposed in any academic year, or a previous penalty has already been applied
 - The student will normally be notified of the decision and penalty within 5 working days of the meeting of the Panel considering the case

7. Guidance on Academic Misconduct with Partner Institutions

- 7.1. Where academic provision is delivered in partnership with other organisations, including through franchised arrangements, SPS retains responsibility for the academic standards of its awards.
- 7.2. SPS will work closely with all partner institutions to ensure that robust and consistent academic misconduct procedures are in place and effectively implemented. This includes ensuring that:
- Allegations of academic misconduct are identified, reported, and investigated in a timely and appropriate manner
 - Investigative processes are fair and transparent
 - Students are afforded appropriate rights, including the opportunity to respond to allegations and to appeal decisions
 - Outcomes and sanctions are applied consistently and proportionately
- 7.3. Where a partner institution has its own academic misconduct procedures, SPS will undertake appropriate due diligence to ensure alignment with institutional expectations and regulatory requirements.
- 7.4. Where necessary, SPS will work collaboratively with partners to enhance or adapt procedures to ensure equivalence in standards and practice. Procedures for Academic Misconduct processes will be outlined within the Student handbooks.
- 7.5. Clear arrangements for the management of academic misconduct, including roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines, will be defined within formal partnership agreements.

Version History

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1.0	First Approved Version	September 2025	Governing Body