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Useful Resources & Print-Outs

The following resources are included at the end of this pack:

Academic Offences Procedures 2019–20
including the Guidelines for Penalties for Taught Students
Appendix 1: Checklist for Departmental Investigations
Appendix 2: Suggested Academic Offences Meeting Running Order
Appendix 3: Suggested Academic Offences Committee Running Order
Appendix 4: Suggested Academic Offences Appeal Committee Running Order
INTRODUCTION

The Academic Offences Procedures at the University of Essex set out the approach that Departments, Schools and Partner Institutions should take in response to poor academic practice or cheating by their students. This guidance outlines how the University supports students in avoiding academic offences, and the steps that should be taken when a student fails to meet the University’s expectations in relation to academic integrity.

Through its Departments, Schools and Partner Institutions, the University aims to apply a tailored approach in ensuring that their students are fully aware of the University’s expectations in relation to academic integrity and are supported in developing their understanding of academic conventions and ethical research.

When concerns arise, the University endeavours to ensure that all allegations of an academic offence are considered impartially and transparently, that students can gain appropriate support throughout the investigation, and that penalties are applied fairly and consistently across the University and its Partner Institutions.

This guidance is for staff involved in the handling of formal academic offence investigations at Partner Institutions and supplements the Academic Offences Procedures 2019-20.

Advice & Guidance

The Academic Offences Procedures are maintained and reviewed by the Student Progress Team, in partnership with the Postgraduate Research Education Team and the Partnerships Team.

Please use the links below for information about each team, including contact details:

Partnerships Team
www.essex.ac.uk/staff/professional-services/partnerships-team

Student Progress Team
www.essex.ac.uk/staff/professional-services/student-progress-team

Postgraduate Research Education Team
www.essex.ac.uk/staff/professional-services/postgraduate-research-education-team
ACADEMIC OFFENCES PROCEDURES: ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Only approved Adjudicators and Academic Offence Committees are permitted to conduct formal investigations and issue penalties.

**Departmental Adjudicators** are academic members of staff based within the student’s Department at the Partner Institution that are appointed to conduct the initial investigations for suspected academic offences and have a limited range of penalties that they can apply for coursework offences committed by undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. Appointments are approved by the Dean of Partnerships (or their Deputy).

The Departmental Adjudicators must conduct their investigation in line with the Academic Offences Procedures and have a limited range of penalties that they can apply directly. For serious allegations (including for all formal exams and all postgraduate research students), the Departmental Adjudicator must prepare a referral to the Dean of Partnerships (or their Deputy) via the University Partnerships Team.

The role of **Faculty Adjudicator** is taken up by the Dean of Partnerships (or their Deputy), or anyone based at the Partner Institution that they have nominated. Faculty Adjudicators handle cases that have been escalated by the student’s Department, including all allegations relating to formal exams and postgraduate research students. As such, Faculty Adjudicators are required to have an appropriate level of seniority and independence from the student’s Department. The Faculty Adjudicators have a limited range of penalties that can be applied and may refer serious allegations to an Academic Offences Committee.

**Academic Offences Committees** are convened to consider the most serious allegations and have the full range of penalties available to them, including penalties that withdraw and/or withhold (or rescind) qualifications from the student.

Committees are chaired by the Dean of Partnerships (or their Deputy) who are joined by two other academic members of staff that are independent from the student’s Department. In some cases, Committees may occasionally be chaired by a Dean (or Deputy Dean) of one of the University of Essex’s Faculties, and the membership may include academic members of staff from one of the University of Essex’s own academic Departments.

The **Departmental Adjudicator** is also required to attend the committee meeting in order provide a verbal presentation of the allegation and answer any questions that the Committee have.
**Appointed Deans** consider appeals submitted by students against a penalty that has previously been issued. The Appointed Dean is normally the Dean of Partnerships (or their Deputy) unless they have had prior involvement with the case already, in which case, an alternative Dean (or Deputy Dean) of one of the University of Essex’s Faculties will be asked to consider the case.

The **Initial Adjudicator** is the Adjudicator that issued the penalty that the student is appealing against. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Initial Adjudicator is asked to provide a short report to the Appointed Dean to explain how the initial decision was reached. If the penalty was issued by an Academic Offences Committee, then the Chair of the Committee will normally take on the role of Initial Adjudicator.

**Academic Offences Appeal Committees** are convened to consider appeals that have been upheld by the Appointed Deans and can amend or rescind penalties previously awarded. The Committee operate in a similar way to Academic Offences Committees and are chaired by the Appointed Dean. The Initial Adjudicator that is required to attend the committee meeting in order provide a verbal presentation of the original findings and answer any questions that the Committee may have.

The University’s **Partnerships Team** provide direct advice and guidance to staff and students at Partner Institutions regarding the academic offences procedures and administer all cases referred to the Dean of Partnerships (or their Deputy), including all appeals.

The **Student Progress Team** and **Postgraduate Research Education Team** normally provide advice and support to the Partnerships Team on complex cases. Occasionally, a member of one of these teams may attend an Academic Offences Committee or Appeal Committee to give advice on the procedures or precedence from previous cases.

The Student Progress Team are also responsible for keeping the Academic Offences Procedures under regular review, with feedback from Partner Institutions provided by the Partnerships Team.

**Exam Boards (UG and PGT)** and **Examiners (PGR)** are bound by the Academic Offences Procedures to apply penalties that have been issued by Adjudicators or Committees, when making formal decisions about a student’s progress towards an award and cannot overturn penalties that have been independently applied.
WHAT IS AN ACADEMIC OFFENCE?

The Academic Offences Procedures state that the University, the Students’ Union and the University’s Partner Institutions expect all students:

▪ to behave with honesty and integrity in relation to coursework, examinations and other assessed work;
▪ to be familiar and act in accordance with the conventions of academic writing including appropriate referencing of sources and acknowledgement of assistance;
▪ to show understanding of ethical considerations and be compliant with the relevant University Procedures.

An academic offence is any instance where a student has not met these expectations, whether by negligence or by intent, and any reported breach of these expectations, no matter how serious or minor, should be subject to the Academic Offences Procedures.

The procedures have a list of some of the most common examples of academic offences (although the list is not exhaustive!), which includes:

▪ plagiarism, that is, using or copying the work of others (whether written, printed or in any other form) without proper acknowledgement in any assignment, examination or other assessed work;
▪ self-plagiarism, that is, using or copying one’s own work that has previously been submitted for assessment, at the University or elsewhere, without proper acknowledgement in any assignment, examination or other assessed work, unless this is explicitly permitted;
▪ false authorship or contract cheating, that is the soliciting of a third party to provide written material that is then submitted for assessment presented as one’s own original work;
▪ collusion, that is, submitting work produced collaboratively for individual assessment, unless this is explicitly permitted and acknowledged;
▪ falsifying data or evidence;
▪ unethical academic practice, for example, conducting research without obtaining ethical approval from the University where such approval is required, or the unauthorised use of information that has been confidentially acquired;
▪ introducing, or attempting to introduce, any written, printed or electronically accessible information into an examination, other than material explicitly permitted in the instructions for that examination;
▪ copying, or attempting to copy, the work of another candidate in an examination;
▪ communicating, or attempting to communicate, with another person, other than an invigilator, during an examination.
▪ accessing, or attempting to access, the assessment material (such as an examination paper) prior to it being published, except in cases where it is formally permitted by the University.

Formative Assessment

The Academic Offences Procedures do not formally apply to work submitted for formative assessment. However, it is still important that students are still warned in some way and are referred to the relevant support and guidance as appropriate.

Assisting other students in committing academic offences and maliciously false allegations

A student suspected of helping another student commit an academic offence or found to be making maliciously false allegations against a fellow student should be investigated under the Partner Institutions non-academic Disciplinary Procedures.
PREVENTING ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Partner Institutions are responsible for preparing students for their coursework and exams and ensuring that they are fully aware of the expectations in relation to academic integrity and what may be constituted as an academic offence.

Departments within Partner Institutions should ensure that:

- Inductions for new students at all levels of study cover academic writing and referencing, with advice about the potential repercussions for failures to adhere to academic conventions and standards of academic integrity.

- That appropriate guidance for students is available for information about referencing, the academic offences procedures and the academic support available, such as Departmental Handbooks or online guidance.

- All teaching staff, but especially Personal Tutors or Student Advisers, are aware of the support that is available to students, both within the Department and elsewhere.

- Suitable invigilation and announcements are made in formal examinations and class tests (or equivalent) in order to prevent cheating.

Departments within Partner Institutions should also consider:

- Including regular guidance and warnings in the coursework instructions for all modules and assignments, which is particularly useful for ensuring students studying joint courses across different Departments or individual modules as an outside option are aware.

- Having some form of formative assessment in the early stages of the curriculum for all courses, particularly for undergraduate students, but recommended for Master’s students too, allowing for an opportunity for informal feedback about academic conventions.

- Requiring students to submit a declaration that their work is their own each time they complete an assessment. At the University of Essex, students complete this declaration by confirming they have read and understood the statement of authorship that is presented every time they submit their work online. The statement also asks the student to confirm that they are familiar with the University’s academic conventions and reminds them of the advice and guidance that exists around the University.

- Publishing referencing guides for students, either at institutional or Departmental level, and providing additional workshops or online short courses to students that may struggle to understand the conventions.

The University will also ensure that:

- Guidance about the Academic Offences Procedures are available on the University of Essex website
IDENTIFYING ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Academic Offences can be identified at any time but concerns normally arise when the student’s work is being assessed. Anyone marking work should be vigilant in reporting their suspicions to the Departmental Adjudicator. Only approved Adjudicators and Academic Offence Committees are permitted to conduct formal investigations and issue penalties.

Departments and Partner Institutions should establish their own arrangements about who inspects the coursework and how the Departmental Adjudicator is made aware of suspected academic offences.

At the University of Essex, all work is automatically submitted to a plagiarism checker called Ephorus that is a program embedded within our online portal for coursework submission. Ephorus scans the coursework submission for similarities with other published material in its resource bank and produces a similarity score and a full similarity report. In some Departments, the module leader or the marker reviews the similarity reports and alerts the Departmental Adjudicator, whereas in other Departments, the Adjudicator does this directly.

The University also prescribes to another plagiarism checker called Turnitin. This has a much bigger bank of source material but is not embedded within the University systems. As such, Departments are required to download coursework submissions and upload them separately to Turnitin, a manual process that can also be done “in bulk”. Departments are encouraged to undertake this process as reports are more extensive, but it is not compulsory. As such, some Departments submit all coursework to Turnitin, whilst others only do substantial assignments for key modules.

Formal Exams & Class Tests

At the University of Essex, formal examinations are organised by a central Exams Office who employ Exam Invigilators on temporary contracts.

Invigilators check that all bags are placed at the front of the room and mobile phones are placed on the desk, and accompany all students taking toilet breaks during the exam. Announcements are also made at the start of each formal examination warning students about the consequences of having a mobile phone on their person, speaking to other candidates or any suspicious activity that might be considered an offence or cheating.

If the Exam Invigilator suspects a student of having committed an offence, the Invigilator will accompany the student to the Exams Office and complete an Incident Report Form. Any unauthorised material (such as handwritten notes) are confiscated from the student. Devices, such as mobile phones, are checked to see if they are switched on and have been used. If material is found, then the Department is asked to comment on whether the material is relevant to the subject.

Class Tests are organised and invigilated by Departments directly and are advised that they should aim to replicate the formalities of a Formal Exam as closely as possible.
Anonymous Marking

The University of Essex operates anonymous marking, so markers are not normally aware of whose work they are reviewing when the mark is given. However, once the marking is complete, anonymity no longer needs to apply and it remains possible for concerns to still be raised with the Departmental Adjudicator, even if a mark has been released to the student.

This may be relevant if it is noted that the student’s mark is suspiciously higher than what was expected, or the writing style or standard of English is a lot different to the student’s other work.

Whistleblowing

Partner Institutions may become aware of a suspected academic offence following an allegation made by another member of the University community, including students, staff or external stakeholders.

Partner Institutions should look to keep accurate records of any discussions that take place with anyone submitting an allegation. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) suggests that accused students should hold the right to know the name of their accuser, so anyone that is reporting an academic offence should be advised that their name may be made available to the student that they are submitting an allegation about.

Former Students

It is still possible, and occasionally required, for Partner Institutions to conduct investigations against former students that have already left the University. In all cases where a student has already graduated with an award (including exit awards), the allegation must be referred to an Academic Offences Committee who will hold the authority to apply a penalty that may then amend or rescind an award previously issued. The normal range of penalties may apply, and the University’s Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) must be consulted with before any new penalty is issued. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) may also approve any amendments to the Academic Offences Procedures as deemed appropriate.
ACADEMIC OFFENCE INVESTIGATIONS

Partner Institutions must conduct Academic Offence investigations in line with the Academic Offence Procedures. Each Partner Institutions will have nominated Departmental Adjudicators that are responsible for taking forward any matters through the Academic Offences Procedures.

Ahead of each academic year, the Partnerships Team asks Partner Institutions to make nominations to the role of Departmental Adjudicators for approval.

Examination Allegations

Students that are accused of an offence during a formal examination should be referred directly to the Faculty Adjudicator, via the Partnerships Team.

- The Partnerships Team should submit an Academic Offences Referral Form, along with a report of the incident that occurred during the exam, a copy of the exam paper and a copy of the student’s exam script (preferably before it has been sent for marking).
- The Faculty Adjudicator may meet with the student directly, or refer the matter to an Academic Offences Committee, at which the Departmental Adjudicator will be asked to attend.
- The Departmental Adjudicator will be asked to present their findings to the Committee. They will not be asked to present on behalf of the Invigilator but should give the Department’s perspective on the relevance of the material that was found, how this might have benefitted the student and how the student’s answers in the exam may correlate.

PGR Allegations

- Postgraduate research students are held to the highest standard when it comes to academic conventions and integrity. As such, Departments should refer all cases to the Faculty Adjudicator via the Partnerships Team.
- Referrals must be submitted in the required format – please see the guidance overleaf for the procedural requirements on Referrals to the University of Essex.
- In considering whether to raise a formal allegation or not, the Department should consider the formality of the student’s submission. In most cases, students should be expected to adhere to the University’s expectations and conventions, even if work has been submitted as a draft.
- If there is any ambiguity whether an academic offence has occurred or not, then the Department should conduct an investigatory meeting with the student first to discuss the concerns before submitting a referral.
- Please note that if an offence is committed by a PGR student that is studying on a taught module (either coursework or exam), then the Academic Offences Procedures for taught students should be applied.
Coursework Allegations – Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students

Departmental Adjudicators may issue a limited range of penalties for coursework offences but must ensure that the Academic Offences Procedures are followed. Below is a step-by-step guide about how such allegations should be handled:

1. Academic Offence Identified
   A concern is raised, and the Departmental Adjudicator is notified. If the Departmental Adjudicator agrees that there may be a suspected academic offence, then the formal procedures are initiated.

2. Checks on the Student’s Record of Academic Offences
   The Department should check whether the student has any previous academic offences, and whether they have been required to attend an Academic Integrity Tutorial following a previous academic offence.

3. Initial Review of the Case
   The Departmental Adjudicator will give initial consideration as to whether the case should be dealt with internally or escalated to the Faculty Adjudicator, which will depend on the severity of the offence and the likely penalty that would be applied. The student’s history of academic offences should be taken into account.
   **Departmental Adjudication:** The Department must attempt to meet the student before issuing a penalty (see below). The Department may only issue 1 of the 4 penalties that are within their authority to issue.
   **OR Referral to the Faculty:** The Departmental Adjudicator should complete a Referral Form and send it to the Partnerships Team, along with all the relevant documentation. The Departmental Adjudicator should also send the student a notification that the case has been referred.

4. Meeting with the Student
   **Departmental Adjudication:** The student should be invited to a meeting that does not clash with a teaching event. The invitation AND the documentation should be sent to the student at least 1 week in advance, and the Partnerships Office MUST also be notified by way of being copied in to any correspondence. The student may attend with a fellow member of the institution or University (student or staff) or the Students’ Union (or equivalent). If the student cannot attend, they may submit a written statement instead.
   **Cases Referred to the Faculty Adjudicator or Committee:** The student meets with the Faculty Adjudicator or an Academic Offences Committee instead. The invitation AND the documentation should be sent to the student at least 1 week in advance. It may be necessary for the Departmental Adjudicator to attend the meeting in order to present the initial findings from their investigation.

5. Outcome Confirmed
   **Departmental Adjudication:** The Partner Institution must confirm the decision to the student in writing AND notify the Partnerships Team.
   **Cases Referred to the Faculty or Committee:** The Partnerships Team will normally administer the Faculty or Committee meetings and ensure the Partner Institution are informed of the final decision.

6. Follow-Up
   Central records of academic offences should be maintained by each Partner Institution, including the dates of the investigation, the nature of the allegation and the final decision that was reached. This is required for annual reporting, but also for each student’s individual student record.
   If the student is given a penalty that allows immediate resubmission, then relevant instructions should be given to the student. If the student does not submit, then a standard mark of zero for non-submission should be recorded.
   If the student is also required to complete or attend an Academic Integrity Tutorial (or equivalent), then arrangements should be made for this with the student directly.
Submitting a Referral to the University of Essex

If it is the Partner Institution’s view that the seriousness of the offence would likely lead to a penalty that is more severe than what the Institution can issue, then the matter must be referred to a Faculty Adjudicator (via the Partnerships Team). This includes all allegations relating to a formal examination, postgraduate research students, or former students.

Partner Institutions must complete an Academic Offences Referral Form, available from the Partnerships Team. A referral form should be supplemented with all and any relevant documentation that supports the allegation. Examples of documentation include:

1. A similarity report from a plagiarism checker, such as Ephorus or Turnitin
2. An annotated copy of the student’s assignment
3. An annotated copy of any alleged source material
4. Any notes from the meeting with the student about the allegation, if one took place.
5. For an exam offence, a report of the incident that occurred during the exam, a copy of the exam paper and a copy of the student’s exam script (preferably before it has been sent for marking).

Documentation should be sent to the Partnerships Team securely. It is recommended that Partner Institutions make use of Box or ZendTo services when sending a referral. Colleagues should remember to take care if sending a referral and the documentation by email.

The Referral Form and the supporting documentation should be presented in a way that can be considered by colleagues from other Departments, who may have limited understanding of your Department’s subjects.

For allegations of plagiarism, the Partnerships Office will not accept a referral without there being annotated copies of the student’s assignment and the alleged source material included, unless it is not possible to obtain the source material. Annotations should be cross-referenced to demonstrate where the material in the student’s assignment is similar with the alleged source material.

Example of how material can be annotated:

**Student’s Assignment:**

![Image of annotated student’s assignment]

**Source Material:**

![Image of annotated source material]
FACULTY ADJUDICATION

Faculties receive allegations that are deemed more serious or severe, for which Departments are not able to issue a penalty against under the Academic Offences Procedures, including:

- Potentially severe coursework offences
- All allegations made in formal examinations
- All allegations made against Postgraduate Research Students
- All allegations made against PG CHEP students

Upon receipt of a referral, the Partnerships Team will consult with the relevant Faculty Adjudicator as to how they would like to proceed:

- **Dismiss the Allegation**: If the Adjudicator believes the Department’s allegation is not valid, then they may dismiss the case. It is best practise to discuss this with the Department first.

- **Meet with the Student**: If the Adjudicator believes the seriousness of the allegation is one that can be dealt within the range of penalties that the Adjudicator can apply under the procedures, then they can meet with just the student (and their representative) and resolve the matter directly.

- **Refer to a Committee**: If the Adjudicator believes the seriousness of the allegation is more severe, then they can refer the matter directly to a Committee.

**Former Students**

All allegations made against a former student must be referred to an Academic Offences Committee. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) has the authority to adjust the procedures as required. The Academic Offences will normally be required to seek approval from the PVC (Education) before issuing a penalty.

**Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (PGCHEP) Students**

Faculty Adjudicators are required to conduct the initial investigation into allegations against PGCHEP students, taking on the role normally conducted by a Departmental Adjudicator. Faculty Adjudicators continue to have the normal range of penalties available to them.

If the matter is referred to an Academic Offences Committee, then the Faculty Adjudicator should complete a referral and present their findings to the Committee but will not be a Committee member.
Students are entitled to a right to reply to any allegation and must be invited to attend a meeting with the Adjudicator in person before any decision about the allegation is reached.

The purpose of the meeting is to explain the offence to the student, give them an opportunity to respond, before reaching a decision about whether an offence has occurred and how to proceed.

**Before the Meeting**

A couple of things to remember before scheduling a meeting:

- The Adjudicator should remember to check for any previous academic offences which may have occurred in the student’s Department, or other Departments that they have studied modules in.

- The student must be given one week’s notice of the meeting and be sent any documentary evidence at least one week in advance of the meeting as well.

- The Adjudicator should try to avoid the meeting clashing with the student’s timetabled teaching events. If required, the meeting can take place via Zoom or Skype (or equivalent).

- Once a meeting is scheduled, the Adjudicator is under no obligation to rearrange the meeting, and so it is at their discretion whether they agree to rearrange or not. If the student cannot attend the meeting, then they may submit a written statement instead. This is advisable for meetings scheduled to take place by videophone, in case of any technological failures.

- The student should be advised of their right to be accompanied by a fellow member of the Institution or University (student or staff) or Students’ Union (or equivalent).

- Students with a Disability (including SpLD) may request reasonable adjustments to the procedures in line with the Equality Act 2010. This may include external or additional representation, or more flexibility with the meeting arrangements.

Departments within Partner Institutions should consider how meetings will be arranged and what administrative support may be provided to the Departmental Adjudicator in the scheduling of meetings. The University provides a template for inviting students to a meeting that ensure key information is relayed to the students, and Partner Institutions can adapt this template for their own individual requirements.
During the Meeting

The Academic Offences Procedures have some requirements for what should happen during the meeting with a student about an academic offence.

Despite these requirements, meetings between Adjudicators and Students should aim to be as supportive as possible, whilst still retaining a degree of formality. The student may be feeling anxious and stressed about the meeting, so Adjudicators should be prepared to respond accordingly.

Departments within Partner Institutions should agree between themselves how meetings will be organised and there is no requirement that an administrator needs to be present. However, some notes from the meeting should be taken. It is suggested that Adjudicators should allow for about 20-30 minutes per meeting with a student, or longer for complex allegations.

The Partnerships Office provide direct secretarial support to Faculty Adjudicators and Committees, ensuring that the procedures are followed.

Below is a suggested running order of the meeting that may help Adjudicators in the delivery of their meeting:

1. Introductions and Checks
   - Has the student received the documentation in advance of the meeting?
   - Is the student aware of their right to be accompanied by a member of the institution or university (staff or student) or Students’ Union (or equivalent)

2. Explain the Allegation to the Student
   - Explain the allegation to the student, including the Department’s expectations.
   - Check that the student understands the relevant academic conventions.

3. Student Response
   - The student must be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation, and provide a defence, mitigation or extenuating circumstances
   - If relevant, ensure the student is aware of relevant support services in the Department and at the University.

4. Make a Decision
   - The Adjudicator should now reach a decision. It is recommended that the decision is confirmed to the student verbally at the meeting, but it is not a procedural requirement.
   - The Adjudicator should ensure the student understands the reason for the student and the implications of any penalty that has been applied.
   - The Adjudicator may wish to adjourn the meeting shortly and allow for a short period of consolidation before confirming the final decision to the student.
   - The student should be asked if there are any other offences that they may have committed and can be considered now. Any other offences that are not declared or occur in the future, may be dealt with more severely.
After the Meeting

There are a few steps that must be taken once an investigation has been concluded:

- The student must be sent a written outcome of the meeting that includes an explanation of how the decision was reached. The written outcome must include advice about the student’s right of appeal against a penalty.
- The Partnerships Team must be notified of the outcome of the meeting, normally by copying in partnerships@essex.ac.uk to the written outcome.
- If the student is given a penalty that requires the student to resubmit a piece of work with minor amendments, the Adjudicator must confirm the deadline by which the work should be resubmitted and the Department within the Partner Institution must ensure that this is followed up upon.
- If the student is also required to complete or attend an Academic Integrity Tutorial (or equivalent), then the Partner Institution should ensure that arrangements are made with the student directly.

The University provides useful templates for confirming the written outcome and ensures all the key information is included. Partner Institutions can adapt this template for their own individual requirements.

Allegations Against Multiple Students (Collusion or Copying)

In some cases, it may be necessary to meet with multiple students regarding the same allegation. We recommend seeing all students in one meeting. All students should be seen together, then be asked to wait outside before being seen individually. This allows students to make any statements in confidence and allows the Adjudicator to challenge any discrepancies in the group’s version of events.

If your Institution uses a plagiarism checker and a similarity report highlights matches between two pieces of work that have recently been submitted, please bear in mind that whilst the report might indicate who submitted the work first, it will not necessarily indicate who the original author is.

Individual students should not be exonerated until the Adjudicator is ready to make a final decision for all the students that are involved in the case. If the matter is being referred to the Faculty, all students involved should be referred.
Allegations of False Authorship, Contract Cheating or Personation

Some of the most serious academic offences are ones where students have arranged for someone else to complete their assessment for them or asking someone to sit an examination or class test in their place.

- Concerns may arise because the work discusses unexpected topics, uses unusual references or doesn’t cover any of the module content. The writing style, academic standard or use of language may be very different (and usually a lot better) to what the student normally submits. The work may also be very different to what was discussed with the Supervisor or Lecturer prior to submission.

- Academic offence investigations are not subject to anonymity, so once if a marker raises a concern with the Departmental Adjudicator, the Adjudicator should compare the standard of the submission against other work the student has previously submitted (including comparing the marks).

- Students may raise concerns that the person sitting the exam does not look like the student, or Exam Invigilators may suggest that the person sitting the exam does not look like the photo on the student’s ID card.

Viva-Style Discussions

Allegations of this nature are potentially the most serious and should be referred to the Faculty. However, the Department within the Partner Institution should always try to meet with the student first and conduct a viva-style discussion with the student OR to identify the student that attended the exam.

The viva-style discussion is aimed at giving the student the opportunity to confirm that they are the author of the student’s assignment and is not an assessment of the student’s knowledge of the subject.

Here’s our recommendations in conducting this type of meeting with students:

- The student should be notified in advance of the nature of the meeting – either that they will be asked questions about the content of their assignment and should be encouraged to provide their notes or draft copies of their assignment, or that they are being asked to verify their attendance at the examination.

- Questions about the assignment should be prepared in advance and should be of a nature that the author of the assignment should easily be able to answer. Example questions include, “Why did you decide on this topic?”, “Where did you find these references?”, “What was your approach to conducting your research” and “What is the principle argument of the assignment?”.

- A full set of minutes or notes should be taken at this kind of meeting. The discussion that takes place, and the quality of the student’s responses, will form the key piece of evidence, so it is important that the discussion is recorded as detailed as possible.

- If needed, the appropriate lecturer may be at the meeting to comment on the student’s responses. However, the lecturer should not have any further influence on the Adjudicator’s decision, and it is recommended that they leave the meeting once the viva-style discussion has concluded.

- For issues of personation, it may be possible to obtain CCTV footage or to ask someone from the Exams Office to attend the meeting.
ACADEMIC OFFENCES COMMITTEES

Academic Offences Committees have the authority to withdraw students and withhold (or rescind) any qualifications and will only be required for the most serious allegations.

Membership & In Attendance

Committee Members: Each Committee is made up of 3 people: The Chair and two committee members that are not from the student’s own department and have had no previous involvement with the case.

Chair: The Chair is a Faculty Adjudicator that will lead the meeting, ensure the order or proceedings are followed and that the Academic Offences Procedures are adhered to.

Departmental / Partner Representative: The Departmental Representative presents the allegation to the Committee and is expected to have full knowledge of the case. The Departmental Representative is not a member of the Committee, cannot ask the student any questions directly during the meeting, and is not part of the Committee’s private deliberations.

Secretary: The Secretary will arrange the meeting, circulate the documentation, take a record of the meeting and provide the written outcome. The Secretary also provides advice to all attendees on the Academic Offences Procedures (including the penalty guidelines).

Student & Representative: The Student is invited to attend but does not have to. They may also be accompanied by member of the University (student or staff) or the Students’ Union (or equivalent). The student may submit a written statement or any of their own evidence.

Order of Proceedings

Academic Offences Committees follow a generic order of proceedings that may be adapted from time-to-time, at the discretion of the Chair.

Introductions: The Chair will lead introductions, ensure everyone has copies of the documentation and ensure everyone is familiar with the proceedings.

Departmental Presentation: The Departmental Adjudicator will be asked to give a summary of the allegation, using the documentation to give examples of the concern. The Committee and student may ask the Departmental Adjudicator questions about the allegation.

Student Response: The student is invited to respond to the allegation, either by way of defence or mitigation (including any extenuating circumstances). The Committee may ask the student any questions about their response.

Committee Deliberation: The Committee meeting is adjourned, and the Departmental Adjudicator and student are excused. The Committee members discuss their findings with the aim of reaching a decision about the allegation.

Committee’s Decision: The Committee meeting is resumed, and the student is advised of the outcome of the Committee’s deliberations. This is normally the final decision but might be confirmation that the investigation will continue. The student is advised of their right of appeal.
DETERMINING AN ACADEMIC OFFENCE
AND THE PENALTY

The basic steps for Adjudicators to follow when adjudicating an academic offence allegation are:

Has an Academic Offence Been Committed?

- An academic offence should be deemed to have committed even if the student didn't intend it. A lack of intent may suggest a more lenient penalty but does not expunge the offence itself.
- The standard of proof as to whether an offence has occurred should be based on the balance of probabilities, as stated in the procedures.
- The student's array of marks should not be taken into consideration when deciding about the offence or allocating a penalty, unless the significant difference in the student's mark is being submitted as evidence.

What Penalty Should be Applied?

- Only penalties given in the Academic Offences Procedures can be issued.
- Consider the severity of the offence using the Penalty Guidelines in the Academic Offences Procedures, but remember that a Similarity Score should be scrutinised, and note that sometimes it is the nature of the offence and not just the amount of plagiarism.
- Does the student have any previous offences that should be considered? If so, how similar is the previous offence, and what efforts has the student made to address the original concerns?
- Has the student provided any mitigation or extenuating circumstances? Has the student co-operated with the investigation?
- Consider the level of study (first year undergraduate, Masters, PhD, etc.), the status of the taught module enrolment (i.e. core, compulsory or optional) or status of the submission towards a research degree.

Should the student be required to attend an Academic Integrity Tutorial?

- Do you think that the student would benefit from completing the online Academic Integrity Tutorial on Moodle, or might the student need some tailored advice, either from Skills for Success or someone else in the Department that will help them improve their academic skills?

Did the student intend to cheat? (Professionally Accredited Courses only – such as Health or Law)

This question only needs asking if the student is on a subject to professional suitability checks on relevant accredited courses, such as Law or a Health-related courses. The Adjudicator should determine that, on the balance of probabilities:

- It has been proven that the student did intend to cheat;
- It has been proven that the student did not intend to cheat;
- It has not been proven whether the student intended to cheat or not.
The following penalties can be applied by:

- Departmental Adjudicators*
- Faculty Adjudicators*
- Academic Offences Committees

Penalty 1: A formal written warning only.
The student’s work is assessed as normal.

Penalty 2: Resubmit unit of assessment with minor amendments only, as determined by the Adjudicator (such as correct referencing, paraphrasing or striking out), for an uncapped mark.

The Adjudicator should set the student a deadline and be specific about what corrections are required/ permitted. Resubmissions are sent directly to the Department at the Partner Institution and are marked as normal.

Penalty 3: Resubmit unit of assessment with minor amendments only, as determined by the Adjudicator (such as correct referencing, paraphrasing or striking out) for a capped mark.

The Adjudicator should set the student a deadline and be specific about what corrections are required/ permitted. Resubmissions are sent directly to the Department at the Partner Institution and are marked as normal, but the recorded mark for the individual unit of assessment will be recorded at 40.0 or lower for UG students or 50.0 or lower for PGT students.

Penalty 4*: Mark of zero to be given for the unit of assessment, reassessment available to the Board of Examiners.

The student will receive a mark of zero and the Board of Examiners will determine whether reassessment is required or available. If the student passes the module overall, then reassessment will not be offered. If reassessment is required, then this will normally be for the maximum of capped pass mark. Extenuating circumstances cannot be claimed against this individual unit of assessment.

*Department and Faculty Adjudicators cannot issue Penalty 4 for Postgraduate Taught Dissertations (or equivalent)

These penalties do not explicitly prevent any students from continuing their studies or gaining a degree. However, please also note that reassessment following Penalty 4 is not guaranteed and is at the discretion of the Board of Examiners.

For example, reassessment is not normally offered for PGT dissertations, if the student has exhausted the maximum number of attempts to pass a module, or for incoming study exchange students. This does not normally need to be a consideration, but if you have any questions or concerns, then please contact the Partnerships Team.
The following penalty may be applied by:

- Faculty Adjudicators and Academic Offences Committees only
- Not Departmental Adjudicators
- Not for allegations relating to Postgraduate Dissertations

Penalty 5: Mark of zero to be given for the unit of assessment, with no resubmission or reassessment permitted.

The student is given a mark of zero for the assignment which is then submitted to the Board of Examiners. If the student passes the module, then no further action will be required. If the student fails the module, then they can only be reassessed in the non-offending aspect of the module.

The following penalties may be applied by:

- Academic Offences Committees only
- Not Departmental Adjudicators or Faculty Adjudicators

Penalty 6: Mark of zero to be awarded for the module, with no resubmission or reassessment permitted.

The student is given a mark of zero for the module. Undergraduate students may be able to carry the failed credits if the module is not core, and if the student is not carrying more than 30 credits overall. Postgraduate Taught Students will no longer be eligible for Master's Degree but may continue with their other modules towards a Certificate or Diploma.

Penalty 7: No longer eligible for full award: Mark of zero to be awarded for the module with no resubmission or reassessment permitted and the student may complete currently enrolled credits for an exit award only.

The student is given a mark of zero for the module. The student can but will normally be able to progress to the next stage of their course and will not be eligible for a degree.

Penalty 8: Required to withdraw immediately and no longer eligible for full award: A mark of zero to be awarded for the module no resubmission or reassessment permitted and the Examination Board to be invited to consider the student only for an exit award on the basis of credits already achieved.

The student is given a mark of zero for the module and is withdrawn from the University immediately. A Board of Examiners will consider all other marks and may confer a lesser award, but not a full degree.

Penalty 9: Required to withdraw immediately with no qualification awarded: A mark of zero to be awarded for the module no resubmission or reassessment permitted and the Examination Board to be invited to ratify credits that have already been achieved for recording purposes.

The student is immediately withdrawn, is awarded a mark of zero for the module and is not eligible for any kind of award from the University. The student's marks are submitted to the Board of Examiners at the earliest opportunity for the ratification of credits only.
Subsequent Offences

A subsequent academic offence will generally result in a more severe penalty, particularly when the student has made little or no attempt to understand the University’s academic conventions since the first or previous offence.

- Offences should only be regarded as “subsequent” after an investigation has been completed and a student has then proceeded to commit a further academic offence.

- Offences occur at the same time, or where the Adjudicator does not think the student has had the opportunity to learn from their previous mistakes, should not be regarded as a subsequent offence.

- The Penalty Guidelines for Taught Students provides a suggested framework about how penalties should be escalated for subsequent offences.

Academic Integrity Tutorials

Adjudicators can require a student to complete an Academic Integrity Tutorial in order to ensure they are well-equipped to avoid committing an academic offence in the future. This should only be offered by an Adjudicator where it is known that the Partner Institution can provide an Academic Integrity tutorial

Whilst there are no direct implications for not attending the Academic Integrity Tutorial, students should be advised that subsequent offences will be dealt with more severely if they fail to adhere to the recommendation, unless exceptional extenuating circumstances have prevented the student from attending.

The type of Academic Integrity Tutorials that Partner Institutions can offer include:

- **An Online Course:** At the University of Essex, there is an in-house online course available to all students and staff that can take up to 1 hour to complete. Students must achieve 100% on the quiz but can have as many attempts as they need.

- **One-to-One Tutorial:** At the University of Essex, students can be referred to a Study Skills Tutor for a one-to-one tutorial to discuss their academic writing, as well as other aspects of their studies that may be affecting their academic skills. The Study Skills Tutor is provided with all the documentation about the academic offence so that they can tailor the advice appropriately.

- **Group Workshops:** The University of Essex also has a workshop model prepared in case the volume of students that are referred to a Study Skills Tutor exceeds capacity. The workshop covers a range of topics relating to academic skills and academic integrity and includes some small practical exercises around referencing.

Professionally Accredited Courses

Some courses are subject to professional accreditation that also require students to meet professional standards, such as Law, Nursing and other health-related courses.

In these cases, in addition to determining a penalty, Adjudicators and Committees are asked to confirm if the evidence suggests whether or not the academic offence was committed intentionally or not.

For students’ subject to Fitness to Practise, the academic offences is reported to the Partner’s Professional Suitability Group who will conduct a separate investigation.

For students studying Law, the record of the academic offence is reported to the Solicitors Regulation Authority directly by the relevant, who may consider refusing to accredit the student.
Departments are not able to issue penalties for Postgraduate Research Students.

For allegations that have occurred prior to the student’s submission for final assessment, the following penalties may be applied by Faculty Adjudicators and Academic Offences Committees only:

- Penalty 1: A formal written warning only.
- Penalty 2: Specified section of submission to be referenced correctly, rewritten or removed, and resubmitted for assessment.

For allegations that have occurred prior to submission for the student’s final assessment, the following penalties may be applied by Academic Offences Committees only:

- Penalty 3: No longer eligible for full award: the student’s registration shall be downgraded and they will be considered for a lesser award only.
- Penalty 4: Required to withdraw with no qualification awarded.

For allegations that have occurred after the submission of the student’s final assessment, the following penalties may be applied by Academic Offences Committees only:

- Penalty 1: Formal written warning only;
- Penalty 2: The Examiners shall be instructed to consider the non-plagiarised sections of the final submission, for the degree for which it has been submitted;
- Penalty 3: No longer eligible for full award: The Examiners shall be instructed to consider the non-plagiarised sections of the final submission for a lesser award only;
- Penalty 4: Required to withdraw with no qualification awarded.
Students have the right to submit an appeal against a penalty within ten working days of the date on which the final decision was confirmed to the student in writing.

Students are required to download the appeals form from the University of Essex website, email it to appeals@essex.ac.uk, and are strongly advised to discuss their appeal with their Students' Union (or equivalent) before they submit it. All appeals are administered by the Partnerships Team.

**An appeal can be submitted on the following grounds only:**

- there is new evidence, which for good reason was not previously available to the Initial Adjudicator, which might have materially affected the outcome;
- the Initial Adjudicator did not follow the Academic Offences Procedures which disadvantaged the student's case;
- there is evidence of prejudice and/or bias during the procedures;
- on the balance of probabilities, the facts of the case did not justify the decision that the student had committed an academic offence;
- the penalty imposed by the Initial Adjudicator was unreasonable with regard to all the circumstances of the case

**Appeal Procedure**

In the procedures, the person that originally issued a penalty is referred to as the Initial Adjudicator. If a penalty was issued by a Committee, then the Chair of the Committee will normally be nominated to be the Initial Adjudicator,

1. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Initial Adjudicator that issued the penalty will be asked to provide a short report explaining how they reached the decision that they did.
2. The appeal is then considered by an Appointed Dean who has had no previous involvement in the case. The Dean will determine whether the student has valid grounds and will either dismiss the appeal or refer the matter to an Appeals Committee.
3. An Academic Offences Appeals Committee is convened and has the authority to:
   a. uphold the original decision
   b. change the penalty
   c. cancel the penalty

**Academic Offences Appeals Committee**

Academic Offences Appeals Committee operate in a very similar way to Academic Offences Committees.

The Appeals Committee is chaired by the Appointed Dean, who is joined by two academic members of staff that are from outside of the student's Department and have no prior involvement with the case.

The Initial Adjudicator is required to attend the meeting and present their initial findings to the Appeals Committee. If the penalty was originally issued by a Committee, then the Chair of the Committee will normally be asked to attend.

The student is invited to attend and make any of their own representations to the Committee.