

## 961 Higher Nationals Academic Offence Policy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is the policy of Peterborough Regional College to prevent cheating, plagiarism and collusion through effective education and communication with its students. Where such offences are detected it is the College's policy to deal with them in a fair but rigorous manner. See section 9 for a definition of these terms.

### 2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to inform students and staff what types of activity constitutes an academic offence and how such activities are dealt with by the College. The College has a responsibility to its students, employers and awarding bodies to ensure that the qualifications its students receive are a fair and accurate representation of their work, and knowledge and skills obtained.

### 3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies to Pearson Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diploma qualifications, including those on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and other national frameworks in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

### 4. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 4.1 P960 - Higher Education Academic and Assessment Regulation Policy
- 4.2 P809 Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure Misconduct and Gross Misconduct and Lack of Academic Progress
- 4.1 Guidelines on the procedures for dealing with instances of suspected malpractice are detailed in the JCQ publication Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments, which can be downloaded from the JCQ website: <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice>
- 4.2 QAA Quality Code Chapter B6: Indicator 14: 'Higher education providers operate processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice'.
- 4.3 QAA report 'Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education: How to address contract cheating, the use of third-party services and essay mills' October 2017.

### 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 The College will establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, up-to-date written procedures for the investigation of suspected or alleged academic offences; and ensure that such investigations are carried out rigorously, effectively, and by persons of appropriate competence who have no personal interest in their outcome.
- 5.2 Where there is a concern, cases will be investigated following this procedure. Staff are obliged to report concerns to ensure academic rigour.

5.3 The Academic Officer is the first point of contact for staff to refer any suspected cases of academic offences. The Academic Officer will act as a liaison between the College Director of Quality, academic staff and students in the first instance, overseeing and monitoring claims and ensuring that the policy is adhered to. Where relevant, investigations will be referred to the JQC by the College Quality Director.

## 6. RISK ANALYSIS

**This policy is required to** ensure that correct procedures are in place and followed by all involved in the assessment and guidance offered to higher education students.

### **Analyse risks of non-adherence to this policy**

Poor success rates, poor external stakeholder perception and loss of business as a result; loss of certification rights for qualifications.

### **Staff training needed**

Induction and refresher training to be made available to staff.

**Compliance** reduces the risks described above.

## 7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.2 A Section One Impact Assessment has been conducted for this policy.

## 8. DATA PROTECTION

8.1 All notes, letters and incident logs pertaining to academic offence procedures will be stored securely for a period of 5 years. Where required, Academic offences are reported to the awarding body under strict information sharing protocols. We may use anonymised data collected as part of an individual's application and enrolment for the purpose of fulfilling statistical and reporting requirements.

## 9. Good Academic Practice

Good Academic Practice is a requirement of all higher education study and identifies the required skills and approach of higher education students. It is a requirement that students demonstrate this so as to prevent instances of plagiarism or collusion. Turnitin will be used to ensure originality of submissions and assessments to be submitted via this software will be identified in the course handbook and on assessments. It should be noted that Turnitin is not a punitive tool but should be used as part of the formative assessment process to develop academic writing and referencing.

To demonstrate good academic practice students must:

- Develop their independent evaluation of academic issues
- Draw upon research from academics in their field of study
- Discuss and evaluate existing concepts and theories
- Demonstrate their understanding of the key literature
- Develop their arguments.

To support their own good academic practice they will need to develop:

- Study and information skills (e.g. reading, note taking, research etc.)
- Skills of critical enquiry and evaluation (e.g. taking a balanced opinion, using reasoning and argument)
- Appropriate academic writing skills (e.g. for essays, reports, dissertations etc.)
- Accurate referencing skills to prevent allegations of poor academic practice, dishonesty,

plagiarism, cheating or fraud. Individual work needs to be clearly identified to prevent collusion. If students in a class are instructed or encouraged to work together in the pursuit of an assignment, such group activity is regarded as approved collaboration.

- Examination techniques (e.g. preparation, revision)

## 10. Definitions:

10.1 An academic offence is the general term used to define cases where a student has tried to get unfair academic advantage in an assessment for themselves or another student.

10.2 **Plagiarism** is when someone presents another person's work, words, images, ideas, opinions or discoveries, whether published or not, as his or her own. It is also when artwork, images or computer-generated work of others, is used without properly acknowledging where this is from or without their permission.

Examples of plagiarism include: (this list is an example and not exhaustive)

- directly copying from written work, physical work, performances, recorded work or images, without saying where this is from;
- using information from the internet or electronic media (such as DVDs and CDs) which belongs to someone else, and presenting it as your own;
- rewording someone else's work, without referencing them; and
- submitting an assessment which has been produced by another student or person.

10.3 **Collusion** is when two or more students collaborate in the preparation or production of work which is submitted by each as his or her own unique work but is identical or substantially similar. Collusion also occurs where there is unauthorised co-operation between a student and another person in the preparation and production of work which is presented as the student's own.

Many parts of university life need students to work together. Working as a team, as directed by a tutor, and producing group work is not collusion. Collusion only happens if work is produced jointly to benefit of one or more person and try to deceive another (for example the assessor).

Examples of collusion include:

- agreeing with others to cheat;
- copying the work of another person (with their permission);
- allowing another student to copy your own work.

10.4 **Cheating** is when someone aims to get unfair advantage over others.

Examples of cheating include:

- handing previously graded work back in unless it is clearly referenced, e.g. by stating name, year of submission, assessment title, unit code and title, unpublished
- taking unauthorised material into the examination room;
- inventing results (including experiments, research, interviews and observations);
- handing your own previously graded work back in;
- getting an examination paper before it is released;
- behaving in a way that means other students perform poorly;
- pretending to be another student; and
- trying to bribe members of staff or examiners.

10.5 **Contract Cheating** occurs when someone has deliberately and knowingly allowed ~~or paid~~ another person to do their work, or sit an examination for them; this may or may not involve payment.

Examples of Contract Cheating include:

- getting someone else to produce part or all of your work;
- submitting essays from essay banks and essay writing services;
- paying someone to produce work for you;
- submitting computer programs from a computer program writing service;
- allowing someone to sit an examination for you; and
- pretending to be another student

10.6 **Poor academic practice** is a term usually used when work is badly referenced and cited incorrectly.

## 11 PROCEDURE

11.1 The handling of a suspected Academic Offence involves the following stages;

1. The Allegation
2. The Investigation (including Awarding Body involvement)
3. The Decision
4. The Appeal

### 11.2 Step 1: The Allegation

All cases of suspected academic offences must be reported to the Academic Officer. Any case of suspected academic offence must be supported by evidence documented by the person who suspects the academic offence. For example, in a case of possible plagiarism, the marker of the assignment should highlight those passages which are unattributed, should provide a note of the sources from which these passages come and should indicate the extent of plagiarism as a percentage of the assessment in question (i.e. Turnitin Report).

11.3 Student whom an invigilator believes to be using unfair means during a formal examination (including unauthorised aids, copying or communicating with others) or breaches any other examination regulation is so informed and the answer book is marked at the appropriate place. Unless the candidate is required to leave the examination room under any other Regulations, the candidate is permitted to continue the examination and a report is made by the invigilator to the College Exams Office at the end of the examination who then forward this to the Academic Officer.

11.4 The Academic Officer is responsible communicating the details of the alleged offence and any supporting evidence to the student ahead of the Awards Board Panel. He/she informs the student of the exact nature of the alleged assessment offence in writing and sends the student copies of relevant documentary evidence detailed below asking for a response to the allegation within 15 working days of the date of the:

- evidence of the original source materials;
- the student's work cross-referenced against the source materials;
- brief written statements from staff bringing the allegation.

11.5 The principal method of communication with a student throughout the assessment offences process is the student's College e-mail account and ProMonitor (the latter is used for the official publication of outcomes and results related to the assessment process). Written

letters are sent as e-mail attachments. Communication is not conducted via postal services expect for the issuing of Completion of Procedures Letters in accordance with procedures for the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

- 11.6 If no response is received from the student within 15 working days, the student is deemed as not contesting the allegation and, therefore, admitting to the offence and the process outlined in Stage 3 is applied.
- 11.7 If the student is registered with the awarding body the Director of Quality at the College must submit full details of the case at the earliest opportunity by emailing a JCQ Form M1 <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice> with supporting documentation to [pqsmalpractice@pearson.com](mailto:pqsmalpractice@pearson.com).

## **12 Step 2: The Investigation**

- 12.1 The Awards Board Panel can be called at any point in the academic year to hear an Academic Offence case. The Awards Board panel will ensure that all alleged offences have been investigated fairly and consistently across HNC and HND provision at the College.
- 12.2 The Academic Officer should submit the student response as part of the report to ensure a balanced report and associated evidence; the Panel will not make any judgements unless they are assured of this balanced approach. If the student fails to engage with the procedure, for instance, by failing to respond to correspondence, failing to attend meetings or do so in a vexatious manner they may be assumed to be admitting to the offence.
- 12.3 Students and staff involved in the investigation may be called to meet with the Panel to provide further clarifying information. Students and staff will be advised of this 5 working days ahead of the Panel in writing.
- 12.4 Students are advised to contact the UCP Student Officer for advice and they are entitled to bring a representative along to any meetings they attend. If a student is unable to attend the meeting, and notifies the Academic Officer at least 5 working days in advance, they will be permitted to submit written representation in support of their case, such as date-stamped draft copies of their work, to support their claim that they did complete the work themselves.
- 12.5 A Viva can be conducted as part of the investigation. The viva should not determine whether the allegation is substantiated, but gather evidence that could be submitted to a formal adjudication process, by allowing the student to defend their work.
- 12.6 For cases referred to the awarding body, on receipt of a notification of suspected malpractice, the awarding body will consider the information provided and decide either:
- to take no further action; or
  - if the notification takes the form of a Report, to make a decision on the case in accordance with the procedures, (where the evidence permits to ask the head of centre to carry out a further investigation as described in sections and provide further evidence; or
  - to investigate the matter further itself.

## **13 Step 3: The Decision**

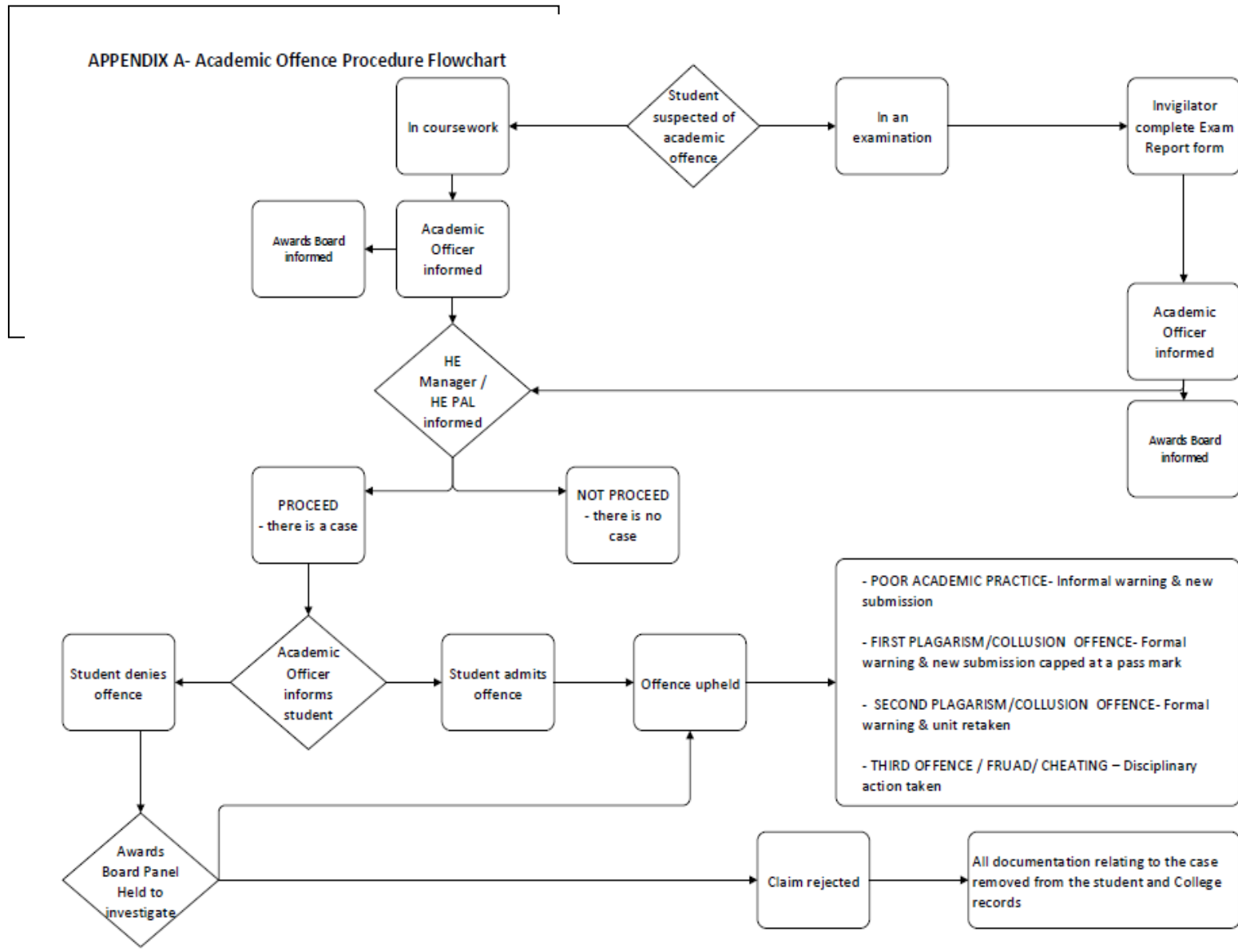
- 13.1 The Panel will decide if an academic offence has been committed and any appropriate sanction (which may include remedial intervention) taking account length of study, previous history of offences and the severity.
- 13.2 The order of proceedings for the Panel meeting will normally follow:
- I. Introduction of those present;
  - II. Allegation of academic offence set out by the HE Manager or HE Programme Lead;
  - III. The student, or the student representative, responds to the allegations;
  - IV. The Panel has the opportunity to question both a subject specialist/assessor, the HE Manager/ HE programme Lead and the student;
  - V. The Chair sums up the allegations. New evidence is not admissible at this time;
  - VI. The student and their representative withdraw whilst the panel reaches its decision
  - VII. The Panel make a decision on the academic offence or otherwise based on the evidence provided;
  - VIII. The Panel makes a decision on the penalty to be applied;
  - IX. The Academic Officer writes up the findings and confirms the outcome in writing to the student within 5 working days.
- 13.3 The Panel hearing is formal in nature and takes place as soon as possible and no later than two months after the student has responded to the formal allegation in Stage 1, requesting a referral to a Stage 2.
- 13.4 The Panel must be Chaired by the UCP Deputy Director, or Director of Quality or HE Manager. It must include a member of the Student Support Staff (for example a Student Adviser or the Student Officer). In reaching its decision, the Panel sits in private and considers whether the case has been proved.
- 13.5 The Panel hearing is formal in nature and takes place as soon as possible and no later than two months after the student has responded to the formal allegation in Stage 1, requesting a referral to a Stage 2 Panel Hearing.
- 13.6 Each case will be considered and judged on an individual basis in the light of all information available. Where there is an established, clearly evidenced, repeated pattern of behaviour this may be taken into consideration when determining whether a sanction should be applied. These can be implemented according to:
- the academic level at which the offence occurred;
  - whether the offence occurred at the initial assessment or re-assessment stage of a unit;
  - whether the offence is admitted by the student during Stage 1 of the Assessment Offences process or the offence is proved through a Panel meeting during Stage 2 of the Assessments Offences process;
  - whether the offence is the student's first, second or subsequent offence (see sanctions below).
- 13.7 Appendix B at the end of this Policy details the penalties to be implemented for upheld assessment offences. All elements of each sanction are applied equally on all occasions.
- 13.8 The 'count' of the number of assessment offences for a student is maintained for separate registrations on courses at the same.

- 13.9 If the student is found not to have committed an academic offence and there is no evidence of poor academic practice no further action is taken.
- 13.10 Where a student has been permitted to be reassessed or to retake a unit the maximum unit mark that the student shall be given under any circumstances shall be the pass mark for the unit.
- 13.11 Any student found to have committed an academic offence will be required by the Panel, in addition to the above, to undertake appropriate study skills and guidance on good academic practice and the accepted conventions in the preparation of their work in whatever form it takes.
- 13.12 The Academic Officer notifies the student of the Panel's conclusion within ten working days of the Panel meeting. The student's academic record is amended accordingly on ProMonitor (but no reference to the assessment offence appears on the academic transcript).

#### **14 Step 4: The Appeal**

- 14.1 If the student believes he or she has been wrongly accused of an academic offence the student can make a case when he or she meets with the panel. The student has a right to appeal if he or she can provide new evidence or believes that the procedures have not been followed properly. Details about the Appeals Process can be found on page 34 of the UCP Rules Regulations and Procedures for Students <http://www.ucp.ac.uk/supporting-you/>

APPENDIX A- Academic Offence Procedure Flowchart





## APPENDIX B- Penalties to be applied for an assessment offence

	COMMITTED IN INITIAL ASSESSMENT/ FIRST SUBMISSION	COMMITTED IN RE-ASSESSMENT/ REFERRAL
<b>Stage 0: Informal Warning</b>	<p>Poor Academic Practice confirmed. The student is issued with an Informal warning. The student is allowed to resubmit. The work is marked.</p> <p>Stage 0: Record of warning is placed on record in student file.</p>	
<b>STAGE 1: First Offence</b>	<p>Mark of 0% awarded for the learning outcome in question.</p> <p>Permitted resubmission of learning outcome in question having rectified the academic offence issues; assessment component. Result capped at a PASS.</p> <p>If the re-submitted work receives a fail mark or the student chooses not to re-submit the standard assessment regulations will apply<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p>Stage 1 Informal Warning letter is placed on record in student file.</p>	<p>Mark of 0% awarded and overall module result of fail.</p> <p>No resubmission is permitted (student therefore fails unit).</p> <p>If progression rules apply<sup>1</sup>, any retake or replacement unit is capped at a pass.</p> <p>Stage 1 Informal Warning letter is placed on record in student file.</p>
<b>STAGE 2: Second Offence</b>	<p>Mark of 0% awarded and overall module result of fail.</p> <p>No resubmission is permitted (student therefore fails unit).</p> <p>If progression rules apply<sup>1</sup>, any retake or replacement unit (if permitted under the Academic Regulations) is capped at a pass.</p> <p>Stage 2 Formal Written Warning letter is placed on record in student file.</p>	<p>Mark of 0% awarded and overall module result of fail.</p> <p>No resubmission is permitted (student therefore fails unit).</p> <p>If progression rules apply<sup>1</sup>, any retake or replacement unit (if permitted under the Academic Regulations) is capped at a pass.</p> <p>Stage 2 Formal Written Warning letter is placed on record in student file.</p>
<b>STAGE 3: Third OR Subsequent Offence</b>	<p>Recommended Expulsion.</p> <p>Disciplinary action is undertaken<sup>2</sup>.</p>	

<sup>1</sup> Refer to P960 Higher Education Academic and Assessment Regulation Policy

<sup>2</sup> Refer to P809 Student Disciplinary Policy