



Academic Misconduct Policy

This policy also includes the procedure to be followed for dealing with suspected cases of academic misconduct in examinations, coursework and dissertations. The policy also includes guidance for academic staff.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Academic Misconduct Policy applies to all assessments and examinations undertaken at SOAS by any student registered for a SOAS award or module including taught, research, intercollegiate and visiting students etc.
- 1.2 The Academic Misconduct Policy does not apply to students registered for distance learning programmes which are operated under the regulations of the University of London External Programme.

2. Academic Misconduct

2.1 Academic misconduct definitions

Conduct which constitutes academic misconduct is set down in the *General and Admissions Regulations for Students* under regulation 21. This includes but is not restricted to the following:

- (a) introduction of non-permitted materials into an assessment or examination
- (b) removal of an examination script or examination stationery from the examination room unless explicitly authorised
- (c) any attempt to confer or gain access to the examination script or other assessment of another candidate
- (d) any attempt to tamper with an examination script after the completion of the examination
- (e) impersonation or attempted impersonation of a candidate
- (f) plagiarism in any assessed work as defined by the School regulations on plagiarism (including self-plagiarism – see 2.3)
- (g) falsification or misrepresentation of data, results, references, evidence or other information
- (h) contract cheating (work produced by third parties, i.e. ghostwriting, essay mills or other sources)
- (i) proof-reading of assessed/examined work which is deemed to have gone beyond the normal correction of spelling or punctuation to a degree whereby the work may not be considered to be the student's own
- (j) any other conduct likely to give an unfair advantage to the candidate

2.2 Referencing

Students must always follow appropriate referencing guidelines when producing work for assessment. Direct quotations from the published or unpublished work of others must always be clearly identified as such by being placed inside quotation marks, and a full reference to their source must be provided in proper form. A series of short quotations from several different sources, if not clearly identified as such, constitutes plagiarism just as much as does a single unacknowledged long quotation from a single source. Equally, if students summarise another person's ideas and judgements, they must refer to that person in their text as the source of the ideas and judgements, and include the work referred to in their bibliography. Failure to observe these rules may result in an allegation of plagiarism. Students should consult their tutor or supervisor if they are in any doubt about what is permissible.

2.3 Plagiarism definition

The definition of plagiarism is set down in the *General and Admissions Regulations for Students* under regulation 21. All work submitted as part of the requirement for any assessment of SOAS must be the student's own work and expressed in their own words and incorporate their own ideas and judgements. Plagiarism - that is, the presentation of another person's thoughts or

words as though they were the student's own – must be avoided and all work must be referenced using approved referencing procedures. Students must also be aware of self-plagiarism (see 2.5)

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- (a) The verbatim (word for word) copying of another's work without appropriate referencing
- (b) The close paraphrasing of another's work by changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without appropriate referencing
- (c) Unacknowledged quotation or paraphrases from a another's work or from the student's own work
- (d) Self-plagiarism - Unacknowledged re-use of a student's own work, for instance by using whole or part of an essay written for one module (either at SOAS or another institution) for another module. This would result in a student gaining credit twice for the same piece of work (See 2.5).
- (e) Collusion – this occurs when two or more students collaborate in the preparation and production of work which is submitted by one or more of the students as their own work (unless this is permitted, i.e. a group assignment)
- (f) Contract cheating – the use of essay writing mills etc. (See 2.8 and 2.9).

2.4 Major and minor plagiarism

The definitions of major and minor plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) Minor Plagiarism

- A small amount of paraphrasing, quotation or use of diagrams, charts etc. without adequate citation. Minor plagiarism may result from poor academic practice. If the plagiarised sections contain critical ideas which are key to the assignment, then this would constitute a major case.

(b) Major Plagiarism

- Extensive paraphrasing or quoting without proper citation of the source
- Lifting directly from a text or other academic source without reference (where material is taken directly from a text of other source the cited material should normally be demarcated with quotation marks and the source should be cited).
- Contract Cheating - The use of essays from essay banks, either downloaded from the internet or obtained from other sources such as essay mills
- Presenting another's designs or concepts as your own
- Continued instances of what was initially regarded as minor plagiarism despite warnings having been given to the student concerned
- Collusion between two or more students.

2.5 Self-plagiarism

The definition of self-plagiarism is set down in the *General and Admissions Regulations for Students* under regulation 21. Work submitted for one module may not be used for another module without acknowledgement and prior approval by the module convenor. Where students draw on their own previous written work, whether submitted for their current degree, or for a previous degree or qualification, this must be clearly stated and referenced accordingly. However, reproducing large sections of an assignment in a later assignment may be deemed self-plagiarism even where this has been referenced correctly. Reproducing large sections of an assignment in this way would mean that the student would be gaining credit twice for the same work. To avoid this, students are advised not to copy work from one assignment to another and to avoid attempting assignments which may have too much overlap. If students are unsure of the requirements they should speak to their tutor before attempting the assignment.

2.6 Repeat offences

Where students have committed repeat offences then later offences will be treated more severely than the first offence. A second offence can only be described as such when any previous offence has been notified to the student and any associated investigation has been undertaken and the outcome notified to the student. Where this is not the case, such an offence should be considered to be a 'joint first offence' i.e. where a student submits three assignments at the same time and has no prior offences.

2.7 Mitigating Circumstances

Mitigating circumstances are often submitted as a defence in cases of academic misconduct. Whether mitigating circumstances are taken into account will depend on the case and these fall into 2 categories:

(a) The student can demonstrate that they were unaware of what plagiarism meant.

Where a student can demonstrate that they genuinely had no understanding of the offence of plagiarism, this will be dealt with as a minor case of plagiarism. However, if students have been informed correctly about what plagiarism is and how it should be avoided it will be very difficult for a student to make a successful case that they were unaware of plagiarism.

(b) Mitigating circumstances (as outlined in the School's Mitigating Circumstances policy).

Circumstances which have been deemed acceptable in relation to module coursework and /or examinations cannot be used as mitigating circumstances with regards plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct. The only exception would be a student who could produce documentary evidence to show that at the time of the offence their state of mind was such that they were genuinely unable to distinguish between right and wrong. In such a case, the penalty indicated by the tariff would be justifiably moderated.

2.8 Contract cheating (also known as ghost-writing)

Contract cheating is where there is evidence that a student has obtained an essay from another source such as an essay mill. It would also apply where the academic has serious concerns as to whether the student had actually written the work submitted. This procedure is a means of gathering evidence to submit to the formal academic misconduct investigation process and is not in itself, an allegation of academic misconduct.

A number of factors might contribute to a suspicion of contract cheating such as:

- (a) The level and style of English is significantly better and/or different to previous work or contributions in class
- (b) The style of the work changes throughout the assignment
- (c) Differences in font/formatting in parts of the assignment
- (d) Misuse/change of personal pronouns
- (e) Out of date/unusual references/bibliography

2.9 Procedure for investigating contract cheating

- (a) The marker should compare the assignment to one or two of the student's other assignments
- (b) The marker should discuss their findings with another academic to see whether their concerns are shared
- (c) If the concerns are shared a meeting should be arranged involving:
 - The academic raising the concerns
 - The student (who may be accompanied by a friend if they wish)
 - A Faculty Student Support Officer to take notes of the meeting

- (d) The student should be asked to bring their notes used in the preparation of the assignment, any draft versions of the assignment and any readings they have used so that they can demonstrate how they worked on the assignment
- (e) The meeting will be held informally and will not be adversarial. It is an information gathering exercise.
- (f) In the meeting the student can be asked questions about:
- What made them choose the topic
 - The content of the work (questions should be of an appropriate level to the module concerned)
 - What sources were used
 - Whether they had discussed their work or shared it with other people beforehand
 - Whether their approach to this assignment had been different to their usual approach
 - Any other relevant questions
- (g) The notes of the meeting and the findings should be passed to the Examinations and Assessments team in the Registry to conduct the formal investigation.

2.10 Confidentiality

The School will treat all correspondence and documentation relating to any proceedings as confidential and will only discuss the information with third parties where this is a necessary part of the investigation process.

3. Procedure for Investigating Academic Misconduct

3.1 Status of allegation

In all proceedings in relation to academic misconduct, a student will be presumed innocent of the charge until the contrary is proved on the balance of probabilities or the candidate admits culpability.

3.2 Investigation of academic misconduct

Where a candidate is suspected of academic misconduct, the following procedure should be followed. There are 6 stages to the formal part of the investigation which will be conducted by the Registry:

Faculty Level

- (a) **Plagiarism Recording Form:** The academic raising the case should complete a Plagiarism Recording Form and pass this on to the Appropriate Faculty Support Office along with a copy of the turnitin report (if applicable) and any other documentary evidence they have collected in support of the case. If the student has used another student's assignment (at SOAS or another college), this should be requested through turnitin. Once the essay has been received the tutor should review the source essay to see if there is a case to answer. ***The Registry will not obtain evidence on the Faculty's or Student's behalf.***
- (b) **Paperwork and evidence:** The Faculty Support Officer (FSO) will check the paperwork is complete and contact the academic if further information is required. If the turnitin report is not provided, the FSO will download a pdf version from Moodle.

- (c) **Collusion:** Where one student has been accused of copying from another, both students should be investigated and two Plagiarism Recording Forms will need to be completed. Turnitin matches assignments against each other in the order they were submitted to turnitin so it cannot ascertain which one of the student's copied the other.

Registry Level (Examinations and Assessments Team)

- (a) **Stage 1** –The Examinations and Assessments Team (E&A) forward the case to the student for comment. Once the student has responded, the case moves to Stage 2.
- (b) **Stage 2** – The documentation along with the student's response will be sent to the academic making the allegation along with a recommended outcome and penalty (if appropriate). Once the academic responds, the case moves to Stage 3.
- (c) **Stage 3** – The documentation along with the student's response and the academic's response will be sent to the appropriate Chair of the Sub Board of Examiners to confirm the outcome. If it is not confirmed, further discussion must take place between the marker and the Chair. If it is confirmed, the case moves to Stage 4.
- (d) **Stage 4** – The student is informed of the outcome and given 10 calendar days to accept or refute the outcome. A non-response will be treated as an acceptance of the outcome. If the student refutes the outcome, they can request a hearing with the Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP) and the case moves to Stage 5.
- (e) **Stage 5** – An Academic Misconduct Panel will be organised to hear the case. The student will be informed beforehand that the AMP involves a re-investigation of the case and the original outcome may be upheld or a less/more severe penalty may be imposed. The student has the right to ask for a review of the outcome under the Review Stage of the School's Appeals Policy and the case moves to Stage 6.
- (f) **Stage 6** – The student may ask for a review of the decision under the School's Appeals Policy. This does not involve a re-investigation of the case and the review will only be permitted on limited grounds as defined in the School's Appeals Policy.

4. Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP)

- 4.1 Under Stage 5 of the Academic Misconduct investigation procedure, students have the right for their case to be heard by an Academic Misconduct panel.
- 4.2 The Academic Misconduct Panel will consist of the following staff:
- An Associate Dean of the relevant Faculty (Chair)
 - A senior member of academic staff with no prior involvement in the case from the student's home department
 - A senior member of academic staff with no prior involvement in the case from outside the student's home Faculty

The Examinations and Assessments Manager or their nominee will act as secretary and ensure a full record is kept of all proceedings. The Secretary is not involved in the decision-making process.

- 4.3 The date of the hearing is to be confirmed with the student. Written notice of the hearing, together with the documentary evidence to be considered, and the names of any witnesses to be called, will be sent to the student by the Secretary at least **14 calendar days prior to the AMP**.
- 4.4 The student may present documentary material or call witnesses in their defence or in mitigation. However, documentary material for consideration by the Panel must be sent to the secretary of the Panel, to arrive at least **7 calendar days** prior to the hearing.
- 4.5 The student has the right to be accompanied to the AMP by a companion who can be a family member, a friend or member of the Students Union who is there to provide moral support but is not permitted to address the Panel. The student is expected to present their own case and answer the Panel's questions. The name and details of the companion must be sent to the Examinations and Assessments team in the Registry at least **7 calendar days** before the meeting of the AMP.
- 4.6 The student will have the right to be present throughout the hearing except when the Panel retires for its deliberations when only the Panel members and the secretary will be present.
- 4.7 The allegations will be presented by the Chair of the Panel and the student will be asked to reply to the allegations. Witnesses may then be called. The Panel may ask questions of all those called before it and the student may raise questions through the Chair of the Panel.
- 4.8 The Panel shall retire to consider its findings. If necessary an adjournment may be called.
- 4.9 A decision will be reached by majority verdict of the Panel. Individual votes of the panel members shall remain confidential.
- 4.10 The Chair of the Panel shall announce the findings and the agreed course of action. The student shall be informed of the outcome in writing by the Secretary within **7 calendar days** of the panel and will be provided with a copy of the notes from the Panel.

5. Penalty Tariffs for Taught Degrees

5.1 Penalties for taught degrees

Although these penalties apply to cases of plagiarism they can also be used for other cases of academic misconduct including examination offences.

In awarding penalties in accordance with the tariff below, attention should be given to the student's overall profile in order to avoid unintentional consequences arising from the penalty. Where a penalty results in the award of a 'fail' mark, that fail will be condonable in accordance with Regulation 11.16 unless the AMP specifically advises to the contrary.

A third repeated offence will be dealt with more severely and will automatically be referred to an Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP).

Code	Taught Degree Penalties
1	Formal Warning kept on file of academic misconduct cases
2	Plagiarised sections of work not marked (this may result in a fail mark overall for the module)
3	Re-submit the relevant piece of work by a specific deadline for a capped mark. Module mark not capped.

4	A mark of 0 awarded for the assignment and the student is required to resit a new piece of work for a capped mark. Module mark not capped.
5	Re-submit the relevant piece of work by a specific deadline for a capped mark. Module mark capped.
6	A mark of 0 assigned for the assignment and the student is required to resit a new piece of work for a capped mark. Module mark capped.
7	A mark of 0 assigned for the module. Student is required to repeat the module in the next academic year (this may affect progression). The Module mark will be capped.
8	Degree class to be reduced by one class. The student will still be required to complete a new assignment to replace the plagiarised one. (If the reduction of the class results in a fail, the student must repeat a new module for a capped mark in the following year). This will delay progression and award.
9	A lower level award is given (i.e. PG Dip rather than masters). The student must complete a new assignment to replace the plagiarised one.
10	Dismissal from the School

5.2 Allocation of penalties for taught degrees

	POOR ACADEMIC PRACTICE		INTENT DEMONSTRATED	
UG YEAR 1	<u>1st Offence</u>	<u>2nd Offence</u>	<u>1st Offence</u>	<u>2nd Offence</u>
Minor	1	2	3	5
Major	2	3	5	7
UG YEAR 2	<u>1st Offence</u>	<u>2nd Offence</u>	<u>1st Offence</u>	<u>2nd Offence</u>
Minor	2	3	5	6
Major	3	4	6	8
UG YEAR 3/4	<u>1st Offence</u>	<u>2nd Offence</u>	<u>1st Offence</u>	<u>2nd Offence</u>
Minor	3	4	7	9
Major	4	6	9	10

6. Penalty Tariffs for Research Degrees

6.1 Penalties for research degrees

If plagiarism is suspected in the actual thesis the examination process must be stopped immediately even if this is on the day of the examination. The case will be referred to the plagiarism investigation process. Due to the complex nature of research degrees, all cases will be fast-tracked to Stage 5 and referred to an Academic Misconduct Panel.

Code	Research Degree Penalties
1	Formal warning kept on file and student required to amend errors.
2	Upgrade work to be rewritten and resubmitted, for reconsideration.
3	Thesis to be revised and resubmitted, without second examination (viva).
4	Thesis to be rewritten and resubmitted, for re-examination (viva).
5	Lower level award is given (i.e. MPhil rather than PhD). The student will still be required to address plagiarism in the submission.
6	Dismissal from the School.

6.2 Allocation of penalties for research degrees

	POOR ACADEMIC PRACTICE		INTENT DEMONSTRATED	
Upgrade	<u>1st Offence</u>	<u>2nd Offence</u>	<u>1st Offence</u>	<u>2nd Offence</u>
Minor	1	5	2	6
Major	2	6	5	6
Thesis Viva	<u>1st Offence</u>	<u>2nd Offence</u>	<u>1st Offence</u>	<u>2nd Offence</u>
Minor	3	5	4	6
Major	5	6	6	6

7. Appeal

7.1 After receiving the written outcome of the Academic Misconduct process a student may submit an appeal against this decision based on the Appeals Policy within **21 calendar days** of receiving the written outcome. There are limited grounds on which an appeal can be raised and these are outlined in the Appeals Policy available on the website:

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/registry/degreeregulations/>

7.2 At the end of the School's Appeal procedure the Student has the right to submit a request for the School's decision to be reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The OIA provides an independent scheme for the review of student grievances under the Higher Education Act 2004.

Appendix A – Academic Staff: Designing Out Opportunities for Plagiarism

A1 Avoid recycling assessment tasks

An increasing number of cases of plagiarism are being detected in which student's copy essays from a student who took the module in a previous year. This is made easier if the same essay titles are used unchanged.

A2 Redefine learning outcomes

The more analytical and creative tasks, the less easy it is for students to find ready-made essay answers on websites. This is fostered by using learning outcomes (and hence assessment tasks) requiring student to analyse, interpret, assess, evaluate, quantify, contrast, disaggregate, integrate, synthesis etc. These contrast with learning outcomes relating to gathering and listening information. Avoid 'standard' essay titles.

A3 Avoid excessive overlap between coursework topics and examination questions

Sub-Boards should ensure that examination questions do not reproduce coursework topics too closely. This process of checking should be carefully carried out. It is undesirable that students should obtain credit for the same work twice.

A4 Use a variety of assessment techniques

Consider the use of individual seminar presentations, group presentations, presentations in relation to an ISP, in-class supervised tests, including open book tests.

Appendix B – Informing and Educating Students about Plagiarism

B1 Induction

There are a number of points in the academic year and several levels at which information and instruction about plagiarism and self-plagiarism can be given. These include Welcome Week (School level), introduction to the Faculty and Department, and the opening session of a programme or a module. Students should be informed about the Academic Misconduct policy and where to obtain help and advice with referencing.

B2 Level of originality expected in university level work

A good way into this topic is by running through the learning outcomes at the start of each module. These outcomes and the level of creativity and analysis expected in assessments should make clear.

B3 Use of sources – quotation, citation, footnotes, end notes, bibliography

The Academic Development Directorate runs sessions on academic skills within departments, covering essay writing and conventions of quotation and citation. These sessions are embedded into core first year modules and can be arranged to take place before reading week in Term 1 to help prepare the students for their first essay. They take up to only half an hour of the curriculum time and benefit the students in term of improving their academic capabilities and informing them of what is expected. In order to make these sessions as subject-specific as possible, the academic skills tutor and the Module convenor plan the session together to make sure the needs of the students are correctly addressed.

B4 International students

Module convenors need to be sensitive to the different educational backgrounds of some international students, if they come from a system that gives high regard to accurate memorisation, respect for standard texts, and avoidance of critical comments. Individual help may be appropriate in some cases.

B5 Collusion and joint working

Group presentations are a useful method of assessment, and joint working is a valuable transferable skill. However, Module convenors need to give guidance as to the limits of acceptable collaboration in relation to the joint writing of essays.

B6 Self-plagiarism and recycling essays for different modules

It is useful to make clear the reason why self-plagiarism is wrong: it is trying to obtain credit for the same work twice. It is a sign of possibly undesirable overlap in Module content if the same essay, largely unchanged, can be submitted for two Modules. Module convenors should consider whether they are repeating each other's teaching.

B7 Early diagnostic essay and continued reinforcement of the message

The information about plagiarism given in induction sessions needs to be reinforced and repeated at points through the year. An early diagnostic essay is a useful tool to reveal students with problems of writing as well as those poor citation skills that could if uncorrected later result in a charge of plagiarism.

B8 Contract cheating and essay writing websites

Students should be warned against using other people to write their essays for them. Turnitin can be effective in detecting essays bought from websites (which are often full of plagiarised material).

B9

Turnitin

Students have the opportunity to run their coursework through Turnitin before submission and to access the originality report. This is an important part of the educational process.

Appendix C – Detection of Plagiarism

C1 Human methods

This rests on the knowledge of scholars of publications in their field, and their ability to spot and identify unacknowledged borrowings. The process and the specialised knowledge can be helped but not replaced by electronic means.

C2 Electronic methods

Online submission of coursework through Turnitin is a useful aid to detection. The results of the Turnitin Notes originality reports cannot be applied mechanically and need human interpretation. A high percentage figure does not necessarily imply plagiarism.

C3 Limitations of Turnitin originality reports

They match text that is correctly cited in the coursework and enclosed in quotation marks; they do not match equations, formulae, diagrams or music; they give links to student essays at other universities but do not automatically give access to the text of those essays – and it has not always proved possible to obtain this evidence; they do not reveal high quality (i.e. unplagiarised) coursework bought from websites or written to order.

C4 Evidence

Whatever the method of detection used, it is essential that the outcome is evidence that will stand up to scrutiny. It is not permissible to proceed on grounds of suspicion alone. Unacceptable grounds (on their own) include the fact that the student has produced work of a higher standard than previously or that the standard of presentation or English is better in some parts of the coursework than others.

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