

Regulations and Procedure for Assessment Offences

2014-2015

These regulations must be read in conjunction with the *General Regulations for Students* and the appropriate *Taught Degree Regulations* (Certificate and Diploma, Undergraduate or Postgraduate Taught) or *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations, Codes of Practice and Guidelines*.

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1. SCOPE OF THE REGULATIONS

The following regulations and procedures apply to all assessments and examinations undertaken at SOAS (except for students registered for distance learning programmes operated under the regulations of the University of London External Programme).

2. DEFINITION OF ASSESSMENT

A course may be assessed by one or more means. The means of assessment include: a written examination or examinations; coursework in the form of essays or reports; an oral examination; a practical examination; a seminar presentation; periodic class tests; or other specified methods. When used without modification, the word examination refers to a written examination.

3. ASSESSMENT OFFENCES

- 3.1 In all proceedings in relation to assessment offences, 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 The School will treat all correspondence and documentation relating to any proceedings as confidential.
- 3.3 Conduct which constitutes an assessment offence 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 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 (including self-plagiarism) in any assessed work as defined in the *General Regulations for Students*
 - (g) any conduct likely to give an unfair advantage to the candidate

4. SUSPECTED MISCONDUCT

- 4.1 Where a candidate is suspected of an assessment offence, the Head of Registry will be informed and will be responsible for investigating the incident. Suspected offences should be reported to the Head of Registry as soon as possible after their detection.
- 4.2 Where the Head of Registry deems on the evidence presented that the irregularity is of a minor or technical nature, they will consult with the Chair of the relevant Board or Sub Board of Examiners. It may be decided that the matter be dealt with by the Board or Sub Board of Examiners concerned and no further action shall be taken.
- 4.3 Where the Head of Registry deems that there appears to be evidence of a serious breach of the assessment offences regulations has been presented, they will make a decision, in consultation with the Chair(s) of the relevant Board(s) or Sub Boards of Examiners, regarding the course of action to be taken. This may include but is not restricted to:
- (a) No mark be awarded for the individual piece of work in question
 - (b) The minimum pass mark be awarded for the individual piece of work in question
 - (c) No mark be awarded for the entire course
 - (d) Withdrawal of the student's right to re-enter for assessments, including resubmission of coursework
 - (e) The results for any or all of the assessments not to be considered by the relevant School Board of Examiners for a period of one calendar year
 - (f) That the incident(s) be referred to an Assessment Offences Panel
- 4.4 With the exception of (f), the decision of the Head of Registry and Chair(s) of the Board(s) of Examiners will be reported to the student and the relevant Board(s). The student will have the right to accept the decision of the Head of Registry and Chair(s) of the Board(s) of Examiners or to request a personal hearing with the Assessment Offences Panel.

5. ASSESSMENT OFFENCES PANEL

- 5.1 The Assessment Offences Panel will consist of the Director of Student and Registry Services, an Associate Dean of the relevant Faculty, who shall act as chair of the meeting, and a senior member of academic staff of the School with no connection to the course of study of the student involved. The Examinations and Assessments Manager will act as secretary and ensure a full record is kept of all proceedings.
- 5.2 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 at least **14 working days** prior to the hearing.

- 5.3 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 working days** prior to the hearing.
- 5.4 The student will have the right to be present during the hearing (except as in 5.6 below) and may be accompanied by a friend.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 The Panel shall retire to consider its findings. If necessary an adjournment may be called.
- 5.7 A decision will be reached by majority verdict of the Panel. Individual votes of the panel members shall remain confidential.
- 5.8 The Chair of the Panel shall announce the findings and the agreed course of action. This may include but is not restricted to:
- (a) Charge not substantiated. No action to be taken
 - (b) The student to be warned with regard to future action and this to be noted on the student's record
 - (c) No mark to be awarded for the individual work in question
 - (d) The minimum pass mark to be awarded for the individual work in question
 - (e) No mark be awarded for the entire course
 - (f) Withdrawal of the student's right to re-enter for assessments, including resubmission of coursework
 - (g) The results for any or all of the assessments not to be considered by the relevant School Board of Examiners for a period of one calendar year
 - (h) A recommendation to the Academic Board that the student's award be revoked
 - (i) Expulsion from the School

6. APPEAL

- 6.1 Following a hearing by the Assessment Offences Panel, an appeal may be lodged by the student with the School's Director and Principal within **14 working days** of the hearing. An appeal may be considered only if:

- (a) There is new evidence that could not have been, or, for good reason was not, made available at the time of the hearing.
 - (b) There is evidence of a significant procedural error made before or during the hearing.
- 6.2 Requests for appeal must be made in writing to the Director and Principal of SOAS within the stipulated deadline. The grounds of appeal must be clearly stated as part of the request and appropriate documentation supplied.
- 6.3 If the Director and Principal decides to allow an appeal they will appoint an Appeal Committee comprising of the Director and Principal (or nominee), who will act as Chair of the meeting, an Associate Dean with no involvement with the course of study of the student involved or the original hearing, and a member appointed by the Director and Principal from the full time sabbatical officers or part time elected officers of the Students' Union. The Examinations and Assessments Manager will act as secretary and ensure a full record is kept of all proceedings.
- 6.4 The procedures for the Appeal Committee will be as follows:
- (a) For the purposes of the hearing, a decision by the Appeal Committee on any point of procedure will be binding.
 - (b) The Director of Student and Registry Services will supply the members of the Appeal Committee and the student, in advance of the hearing, with the grounds for appeal with supporting documentation, the papers presented at the hearing from which the appeal arises and a statement from a relevant member of academic staff (as appropriate) in response to the grounds for appeal.
 - (c) The student will have the right to be present for the appeal and may be accompanied by a friend.
 - (d) The student making the appeal will present their case against the decision or order made.
 - (e) The Appeal Committee will consider the documents presented and may call persons connected with the proceedings from which the appeal arises to address the Committee.
 - (f) The Appeal Committee may, at its discretion, at any time during the hearing of the appeal retire to private session. Only the Committee and the Committee secretary will be entitled to be present during private session.
 - (g) The Appeal Committee will normally reach its decision without adjournment, but may adjourn for a period not exceeding seven days for the purpose of deciding on the order to be made upon the appeal.

(h) The considerations of Committee members will be treated as confidential.

6.5 The Appeal Committee decision will be reached by majority verdict of the panel. Individual votes of the panel members shall remain confidential.

6.6 The decision of the Appeal Committee will be announced by the Chair and will be sent in writing to the student. In communicating the findings of the Appeal Committee, the Chair will indicate the grounds upon which the findings are based

6.7 The decision of the Appeal Committee will be final.

6.8 The decision of the Appeal Committee will be one of the following:

(a) To reject the appeal.

(b) To uphold the appeal. (The Committee may modify or reverse the decision of the Assessment Offences Panel).

7. OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR (OIA)

7.1 At the end of the internal 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.

7.2 Once the internal appeal process has been completed the School's Information Compliance Manager will issue a Completion of Procedures letter (CoP) informing the student that the internal procedures of SOAS have been exhausted and of their right of appeal to the OIA in accordance with the guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/guidance-good-practice-and-events/good-practice-guidance.aspx>

7.3 Further information on the OIA can be obtained from the SOAS Information Compliance Manager and from the Students' Union and from the OIA website here: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.