



University  
Centre  
Somerset

Part of Bridgwater & Taunton College

# Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy

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**Contents**

1 INTRODUCTION..... 3

2 POLICY STATEMENT ..... 3

3 SCOPE ..... 3

4 DEFINITIONS ..... 4

5 RESPONSIBILITIES ..... 5

6 PROCEDURE ..... 6

7 PANEL OF INVESTIGATION ..... 8

8 RECOMMENDATION OF PENALTY TO AWARD BOARD ..... 10

9 AWARD BOARDS..... 11

10 ALLEGATIONS MADE AT OR AFTER THE AWARD BOARD ..... 12

11 APPEALS..... 12

12 REPORT TO THE SENATE ..... 12

13 REVIEW OF POLICY ..... 12

14 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT THIS POLICY RELATES TO ..... 12

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 The University Centre Somerset's (UCS) Academic Misconduct Policy provides accessible and clear information for all staff and students about the policy and procedure and ensures that UCS and any partner organisations comply with UCS, and Awarding Organisation requirements.
- 1.1.2 This policy must be referred to as part of the student induction period and be referenced in programme information. It is also available on the UCS website for students and SharePoint for staff.

## 2 POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1.1 UCS will strive to ensure that appropriate practice is implemented and upheld, and that Academic Misconduct does not occur. Any claims of Academic Misconduct will be fully investigated and appropriate action taken. This will be in line with our associated Awarding Organisations.
- 2.1.2 Everyone at UCS that is undertaking academic work or ensuring the quality of academic work, is part of an academic community which aims to uphold academic honesty and transparency. This involves ensuring appropriate and fair acknowledgment of others' ideas, work, and data used. The lack of acknowledgement and respect through poor referencing or academic practice, inappropriate use of data, unethical practice or other misconduct would indicate failure to complete the learning process necessary. It could also have lasting consequences for future career progression. Academic work should naturally build upon other academic work that has already been undertaken; therefore, the avoidance of plagiarism is particularly important and appropriate referencing or citation is a crucial skill.

Academic integrity is vital, otherwise it could potentially negatively affect a person's academic reputation and limit future career prospects.<sup>1</sup>

## 3 SCOPE

- 3.1.1 This policy applies to all students registered on credit-rated modules or award bearing programmes with UCS and is relevant to all staff, and any relevant third parties involved with UCS and must be followed under any circumstances.

**The Awarding Organisation policies and procedures should also be referred to, to ensure compliance. In some cases, Awarding Organisations require suspected Academic Misconduct to be reported to them immediately and they will then oversee any investigation that takes place.**

UCS reserves the right to apply this policy and procedure where suspected academic misconduct is identified after a student has left (not currently enrolled). This may lead to a decision to revoke the award made to a former student.

A breach of any part of UCS's policies or regulations relating to assessment, or of the instructions issued in relation to an individual examination or piece of assessed work, will be considered an offence, irrespective of the intentions of the students concerned.

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<sup>1</sup> Anon, [Why does academic integrity matter? | Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct \(cam.ac.uk\)](#)

For this purpose, 'examination or piece of assessed work' includes, among other things, written and oral examinations, tests, coursework essays, assignments, projects, dissertations, practical/laboratory work, group, other collaborative work, placements, field trips and reports thereon, designs, artefacts, and computer programmes.

## 4 DEFINITIONS

4.1.1 Academic misconduct is defined as any improper activity or behaviour by a student which may give that student, or another student, an unpermitted academic advantage in a summative assessment. In investigating and dealing with cases of suspected misconduct, UCS and/or its partner institutions will follow the policies and processes approved at institutional approval, review or Awarding Organisation policies where appropriate. Any penalties arising from academic misconduct will be levied in line with the (Academic Misconduct Benchmarking Research) AMBeR Tariff (see section 8 below), unless the Awarding Organisation uses their own penalty system.

4.1.2 The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of academic misconduct which will be considered under these Regulations:

- **Plagiarism:** representing another person's work or ideas as one's own, for example by failing to follow approved UCS convention in acknowledging sources such as the use of quotation marks or appropriate paraphrasing, etc. This includes the unauthorised use of one student's work by another student.
- **Self-plagiarism:** where a student uses their own ideas, data, words or material previously produced and submitted for formal assessment at UCS, another academic institution or for publication (unless permitted by the assessment).<sup>2</sup>
- **Collusion:** cooperation in order to gain an unpermitted advantage. This may occur where students have consciously colluded on a piece of work, in part or whole, and passed it off as their own individual efforts or where one student has authorised another student to use their work, in part or whole, and to submit it as their own. Note: legitimate input from tutors or approved readers or scribes is not considered to be collusion.
- **Essay mills/contract cheating:** the commissioning, purchase and submission of a piece of work, in part or whole, as the student's own.
- **Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations in carrying out research:** This includes failure to follow agreed protocol, if this failure results in unreasonable risk or harm to humans, other sentient beings or the environment, and facilitating of misconduct in research by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others. It includes any plan or conspiracy to attempt to do any of these things.<sup>3</sup>
- **Fabrication, falsification or misrepresentation:** of data, results or other outputs or aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent, or presenting or recording such data, etc, as if they were real.<sup>4</sup>
- **Misconduct in examinations:** (including in-class tests) such as cheating. This could be impersonating someone, being impersonated, giving assistance or obtaining assistance that is not approved by UCS (approved assistance might include a reader or scribe where there is an approved Additional Learning Support (ALS) requirement).

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<sup>2</sup> Anon, (2019) [Definition of academic misconduct | Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct \(cam.ac.uk\)](https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/definition)<https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/definition>

<sup>3</sup> Anon, (2019) <https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/definition>

<sup>4</sup> Anon, (2019) <https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/definition>

## **4.2 Examples of Examination and Assessment Offences**

Note: these examples are not necessarily exhaustive

- 4.2.1 Obtaining or attempting to obtain access to an unseen examination or test paper prior to the start of the examination/test.
- 4.2.2 The introduction or use in an examination/test of any books, notes, paper or devices of any kind other than those specifically permitted in the rules of the paper (e.g. use of a pre-programmable calculator/electronic device where the paper permits use of an ordinary calculator).
- 4.2.3 Failing to comply with the instructions of an invigilator or examiner, or with the printed instructions for candidates.
- 4.2.4 Removing from an examination or test any script, paper, or other official stationery, (whether or not completed) unless specifically authorised by an invigilator or examiner.
- 4.2.5 Being party to any arrangement whereby a person other than the candidate fraudulently represents, or intends to represent the candidate in an examination or test (impersonation).
- 4.2.6 Communicating or attempting to communicate with another student or with any third party other than the invigilator/examiner during an examination or test.
- 4.2.7 Use of crib sheets, revision notes, etc, at any time during an examination or test (unless permissible).
- 4.2.8 Copying or attempting to copy the work of another student, whether by overlooking another student's work, asking for information, or by any other means.
- 4.2.9 The submission for assessment of material (written, computer-generated, visual or oral) or ideas originally produced by another person or persons, without clearly indicating that the material is not original, such that the work could be assumed to be the student's own.
- 4.2.10 Offences can also include the use of intellectual data, images or ideas without acknowledgement; copying, summarising or paraphrasing the work of another student or graduate; commissioning another person to complete work which is then submitted as a student's own work; or the use of essay writing services or work drawn from the internet.
- 4.2.11 The unauthorised use of the work of another student (whether by taking a hard copy without permission or through access to another electronic format such as a memory stick).
- 4.2.12 The representation of work produced in collaboration with another person or persons as the work of a single candidate.
- 4.2.13 The inclusion in a piece of assessed work (other than an examination or test), of material which is identical or substantially similar to material which has already been submitted for any other assessment within UCS.
- 4.2.14 Making false declarations in an attempt to obtain special examination arrangements or special consideration (e.g. extenuating circumstances).
- 4.2.15 The presentation of data in projects, etc, based on work purporting to have been carried out by the student but which has been invented, copied, altered or otherwise falsified.
- 4.2.16 Attempting to persuade another member of UCS (student, staff, moderator or invigilator) to participate in any way in actions which would be in breach of this policy.
- 4.2.17 Being party to any arrangement which would constitute a breach of this policy.

## **5 RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 5.1.1 All students must ensure that they are aware of, and comply with, UCS and programme requirements and that they are not party to any behaviour which could be construed as an examination or assessment offence.

- 5.1.2 Students authorised to work in pairs and/or groups will normally be required to complete a cover sheet declaring whether the work was undertaken alone or as part of a team. Students may be required to name other students with whom they worked and/or identify individual responsibility for component parts.
- 5.1.3 Students submitting an individual assignment must confirm that the work is entirely their own and has been completed in accordance with UCS and Programme Regulations.
- 5.1.4 Module Leaders must ensure that students receive written guidelines clearly identifying the parameters of acceptable practice for the modules for which they are responsible. Where students are authorised/required to work collaboratively, the Module Leader must specify the boundaries of collaboration at the outset. Information on the presentation of written assignments in order to avoid allegations of an assessment offence (e.g. information on acceptable referencing, etc) should be reinforced in lectures, seminars, library Headstart (HE academic development) sessions and tutorials as appropriate.
- 5.1.5 UCS has established a pool of individuals who could be called upon to join any Panel of Investigation. This pool is made up of those in the programme areas or other programme areas, who have not taught the student(s) in question, and members of the Senate or their nominee(s).
- 5.1.6 The HE Team will:
- Provide advice to staff members on whether a suspected assessment offence case should be formally referred to a Panel of Investigation.
  - Provide guidance and advice to individual students who have been formally referred to the HE Team for suspected academic misconduct.
  - Take an active role to share lessons learnt, identify and promote good practice and staff development in relation to the detection and deterrence of assessment offences.
  - Take an active role in monitoring and analysing assessment offence data and consider suitable actions.
  - Ensure that all correspondence with the student is timely.
  - Keep secure records.

## 6 PROCEDURE

### 6.1 Alleged Examination Offence (Formal Written Examination)

#### **Procedure to be followed when the suspected offence is identified**

- 6.1.1 Where an invigilator or examiner suspects that a student may have committed (or be attempting to commit) an offence during an examination, the INVIGILATOR should:
- i) where possible call another invigilator/staff member to act as a witness.
  - ii) where possible confiscate any unauthorised material/device in the possession of the candidate.
  - iii) endorse the candidate's script/paper on the front cover with a note of the time the alleged offence was discovered.
  - iv) note on the script/paper the point the candidate had reached when the alleged offence was discovered.
  - v) allow the candidate to continue with the examination and leave the examination room as usual.
  - vi) record on the invigilation record details of the suspected Academic Misconduct, then write a separate statement with full details of the suspected Academic Misconduct and provide a copy of this statement as soon as is practicable (this should be the same day, unless the examination took place towards the end of the day, then it must be provided first thing the next morning) to the Examinations

Manager or their nominee. The Examinations Manager or their nominee will then make a full written report and send it to the Head of Higher Education (HE) and [he@btc.ac.uk](mailto:he@btc.ac.uk), detailing any confiscated device/materials as soon as is reasonably practicable.

- 6.1.2 The Head of HE or their nominee will then inform the student (using the proforma, Appendix 1) in writing by email and a letter to the student's home address about the alleged Academic Misconduct within five working days (as per 6.5.1).
- 6.1.3 The Head of HE (or their nominee) will, within 24 hours, forward a copy of the written report and details of any confiscated device/materials, to the Curriculum Manager or nominee for comment by the Module Leader and Course Leader. The Module Leader will be requested to comment on the relevance to the examination/student performance of any confiscated material.
- 6.1.4 Should an allegation of an examination offence come to light after the examination has been held, e.g. during the marking process, the person who has identified the alleged offence should consult the Module Leader/Curriculum Manager. If, following discussion, the curriculum team considers that there is a case to answer, the Module Leader/Curriculum Manager will then notify the Head of HE and email [he@btc.ac.uk](mailto:he@btc.ac.uk) of the nature of the allegation. The Head of HE or their nominee will then inform the student (using the proforma, Appendix 1) in writing by email and a letter to the student's home address about the alleged Academic Misconduct within five working days (as per 6.4.1).

## **6.2 Initial action by internal or external marker**

- 6.2.1 Where an internal or external marker suspects that a candidate has breached the Academic Misconduct Policy in respect of assessed work, they should advise the Module Leader for the work in question. The curriculum team will review the evidence and decide if there is a case to answer. If the team decide that there is a case to answer, the Module Leader, in consultation with the Course Leader, must advise the Head of HE by emailing [he@btc.ac.uk](mailto:he@btc.ac.uk). The Head of HE (or their nominee) will inform the student in writing following the procedure outlined in section 6.4.1.
- 6.2.2 The Module Leader must refer the matter to the Course Leader and Curriculum Manager.
- 6.2.3 Where a first-year undergraduate student has committed a technical breach of the HE Academic Misconduct Policy (e.g. poor referencing), in respect of a piece of work worth no more than 25% of the module mark, the following may be considered if appropriate. The Module Leader, in consultation with the Course Leader/Curriculum Manager or Head of HE may at the same time offer the student the opportunity to have the work marked in the usual way rather than go through the formal procedures. The student retains the right to contest the allegation and for the matter to be referred to a Panel of Investigation (as described in section 7). Where the procedure outlined in this paragraph is followed, this must be recorded on the student file and reported formally to the Panel of Investigation and subsequently to the Award Board.

## **6.3 Reporting and Handling Procedure**

- 6.3.1 Informing the Head of Higher Education (HE) and the HE Team - If Academic Misconduct is suspected the Head of HE and the HE Team should be informed as soon as reasonably practicable (within five days), by emailing [he@btc.ac.uk](mailto:he@btc.ac.uk).
- 6.3.2 The Head of HE or their nominee will acknowledge receipt of the allegation within five working days. The HE team will then:
  - notify the associated Awarding Organisation, where applicable in accordance with the Awarding Organisations requirements.

- co-ordinate an investigation, where evidence will be evaluated for sufficiency and consistency and request additional evidence where needed.

Once all reasonable steps have been taken to collect and authenticate the evidence, and it has been fully investigated, outcomes will be identified. All outcomes will be notified to all relevant parties including the associated Awarding Organisation where applicable.

This may result in further action being taken under the Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure.

#### **6.4 Informing the student about the allegation of suspected misconduct**

- 6.4.1 The Head of HE or their nominee will then inform the student (using the proforma, Appendix 1) in writing by email along with a copy of the UCS Academic Misconduct Policy and the Awarding Organisation regulations and requirements for Validated Awards. A letter will also be sent to the student's home address about the alleged Academic Misconduct within five working days.
- 6.4.2 The proforma (Appendix 1) gives the student the opportunity to accept the charge to be laid against them and that they understand that the case will be considered by a Panel of Investigation (see section 7) The student may submit evidence in mitigation, in the form of a written statement, for consideration by the Panel of Investigation if the student so wishes. Should correspondence not be received from the student by the deadline for a response, it will be assumed that the student has accepted the allegation made and the case will be forwarded to the Panel of Investigation. If the student wishes to contest the allegation, the panel will either:
- review the case by correspondence and take into account any written statement that the student submits, or
  - hold a hearing of the Panel of Investigation.
- 6.4.3 The dates of the meeting of the Panel of Investigation will be confirmed in the letter.

### **7 PANEL OF INVESTIGATION**

- 7.1.1 A Panel of Investigation will consist of at least three members. These will be drawn from those in the programme areas or other programme areas who have not taught the student(s) in question, and members of the Senate or their nominee(s). A member of the Senate or other nominated person will Chair the Panel, and the HE Quality Co-ordinator or nominee, will act as secretary to the Panel. The Secretary to the Panel will ensure, as far as is possible, an appropriate gender balance in determining membership. The Panel of Investigation may take place face to face, remotely or via correspondence.
- 7.1.2 Where further information or investigation is required, a nominated person of an appropriate level will carry out an investigation in partnership with the Module Leader in order to provide further information to the Panel of Investigation for consideration. This might include the examination of evidence, and interviewing staff, students and witnesses where appropriate.
- 7.1.3 The panel will normally deal with cases by correspondence unless the case is particularly complex or unless a student wishes to contest their case in person. In the case of a student wishing to contest their case in person, the student may only be permitted to attend part of the meeting to present their case.



- 7.1.4 The dates of meetings of the UCS Panel of Investigation will be arranged as required. A student will not have the right to demand a revised date for the Panel to meet, however certain appropriate circumstances might result in a revised date.
- 7.1.5 The student will be provided with the opportunity to bring witnesses to the Panel of Investigation to support their case. The student will also be required to indicate whether they will be calling any witnesses and if so the identity of those individuals. It is the student's responsibility to arrange for the attendance of their own witnesses.
- 7.1.6 The student will be required to indicate whether they wish to bring a friend (who may be a fellow student, staff member, SU officer or other party) and the identity of any such individual for moral support, however, they will not be automatically entitled to speak on the student's behalf.
- 7.1.7 The Head of HE or their nominee reserves the right to decide not to refer the matter to a Panel of Investigation if it is deemed that the suspected academic misconduct is poor academic skills such as referencing rather than deliberate academic misconduct. This will be done in agreement with either the Module Leader, Course Leader or Curriculum Manager. If this is the case the student will be referred for extra support in order to improve their academic skills.
- 7.1.8 Inclusivity and accessibility will be considered to support a student where applicable, this should be communicated to the Head of HE by emailing [he@btc.ac.uk](mailto:he@btc.ac.uk) before the date of the panel.

## **7.2 A Hearing of the UCS Panel of Investigation**

- 7.2.1 Where a student wishes to contest the allegation in person, the Head of HE (or their nominee), will on receipt of the written confirmation by the student:
  - i) acknowledge the letter from the student, confirming that their case will be referred to the Panel of Investigation and the timing of their hearing.
  - ii) confirm the membership of the Panel of Investigation (as per 7.1.1).
  - iii) confirm the identity of any witnesses called by UCS and invite them to provide a statement, evidence and/or attend the panel.
  - iv) ensure that all relevant evidence is collected and made available to the Panel of Investigation.
  - v) obtain information and/or evidence about any previous proven examination or assessment offences.
- 7.2.2 The Panel of Investigation is required to examine all the evidence relevant to the circumstances of the alleged offence and to interview the student and any witnesses, where deemed appropriate, in order to establish the facts of the case. The student will also have the right to question witnesses, where deemed appropriate by the Panel of Investigation. The student has the right for their case to be heard in absentia and to submit a written statement if they wish but does not have to attend the Panel of Investigation unless they wish to do so.
- 7.2.3 The Panel may decide that the student be subject to a viva voce (oral) examination as a means of determining whether an offence has occurred. The viva voce examination will be conducted by the Course Leader or nominee together with one member of the Panel who will be considering the case.
- 7.2.4 A Panel of Investigation may be adjourned and recommence at a later date, if it is deemed that more information, evidence or investigation is required to establish a judgement.
- 7.2.5 If the Panel of Investigation decides that there is no case to answer, the Course Leader (or nominee) will be required to ensure that all records relating to the allegation are removed from the student files.
- 7.2.6 The outcome of the Panel of Investigation will be reported to the student and the relevant Course Leader (or nominee) in writing normally within five working days of the meeting.

## 8 RECOMMENDATION OF PENALTY TO AWARD BOARD

8.1.1 If an allegation of academic misconduct is not substantiated, and no further action is required, all records relating to the allegation will be removed from the student's record. However, advice and guidance might be given to the student to support them if deemed to be appropriate and beneficial to the student's academic progress.

If an offence is found to have been committed, the Panel of Investigation will recommend an appropriate penalty to the Award Board as sanctioned through the College's Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure and under the authority of the Senate. The recommendation will take account of the seriousness of the offence, the student's intent or otherwise and, where relevant, any previous offences of which the student has been found guilty, together with custom and practice across UCS. This will be in line with the Academic Misconduct Benchmarking Research (AMBeR) tariff detailed below. Misconduct at exams will attract the same level of points as the highest level of plagiarism.

Step 1: Assign points based on the following criteria:

### **History**

1st Time	<b>100 points</b>
2nd Time	<b>150 points</b>
3rd/+ Time	<b>200 points</b>

### **Amount / Extent**

Below 5% <b>AND</b> less than two sentences	<b>80 points</b>
As above but with <b>critical aspects*</b> plagiarised	<b>105 points</b>
Between 5% and 20% <b>OR</b> more than two sentences but not more than two paragraphs	<b>105 points</b>
As above but with <b>critical aspects*</b> plagiarised	<b>130 points</b>
Between 20% and 50% <b>OR</b> more than two paragraphs but not more than five paragraphs	<b>130 points</b>
As above but with <b>critical aspects*</b> plagiarised	<b>160 points</b>
Above 50% <b>OR</b> more than five paragraphs	<b>160 points</b>
Submission purchased from essay mill or ghost-writing service	<b>225 points</b>

*\*Critical aspects are key ideas central to the assignment*

### **Level / Stage**

Level 4	<b>70 points</b>
Level 5	<b>115 points</b>
Level 6/Postgraduate	<b>140 points</b>

### **Value of Assignment**

Standard weighting	<b>30 points</b>
Large project (e.g. final year dissertation)	<b>60 points</b>

### **Additional Characteristics**

Evidence of deliberate attempt to disguise plagiarism by changing words, sentences or references to avoid detection **40 points**.

**Step 2: Award penalties based on the points**  
**PENALTIES (Summative Work)**

In all cases a formal warning is given and a record made contributing to the student's previous history

Points	Available Penalties (select one)
280 - 329	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•No further action beyond formal warning</li> <li>•Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required, with no penalty on mark</li> </ul>
330 - 379	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•No further action beyond formal warning</li> <li>•Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required, with no penalty on mark</li> <li>•Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required but mark capped or reduced</li> </ul>
380 - 479	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required but mark capped or reduced</li> <li>•Assignment awarded 0% - no opportunity to resubmit</li> </ul>
480 - 524	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Assignment awarded 0% - no opportunity to resubmit</li> <li>•Module awarded 0% - re-sit required, but mark capped or reduced</li> <li>•Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, but credit still awarded</li> </ul>
525 - 559	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Module awarded 0% - re-sit required, but mark capped or reduced</li> <li>•Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, but credit still awarded</li> <li>•Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, and credit lost</li> <li>•Award classification reduced</li> <li>•Qualification reduced (e.g. Honours -&gt; no Honours)</li> <li>•Expelled from institution but credits retained**</li> <li>•Expelled from institution with credits withdrawn**</li> </ul>
560+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to resit, and credit lost</li> <li>•Award classification reduced</li> <li>•Qualification reduced (e.g. Honours -&gt; no Honours)</li> <li>•Expelled from institution but credits retained**</li> <li>•Expelled from institution with credits withdrawn**</li> </ul>

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**9 AWARD BOARDS**

- 9.1.1 The Course Leader must ensure that all recommendations from Panels of Investigation are notified to the relevant Award Board.
- 9.1.2 An Award Board must formally consider all cases of proven examination or assessment offences and either endorse the recommended action or agree to substitute an alternative (in which case it must provide a full rationale). All discussion must be recorded fully in the minutes.
- 9.1.3 A student found to have committed an examination or assessment offence, the penalty for which is such as to make them ineligible for the award on which they are registered (or to result in their exclusion from UCS under the Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure, which is available on the UCS website, is nonetheless eligible for any intermediate award for which the student has legitimately met the academic requirements, and any such award must therefore be conferred.
- 9.1.4 Where the recommendation of the Panel of Investigation has been changed by the Award Board, the student must be informed in writing of the change, and the rationale for the change must be forwarded to the Chair of the Panel of Investigation.

## **10 ALLEGATIONS MADE AT OR AFTER THE AWARD BOARD**

- 10.1.1 Exceptionally, an alleged offence may come to light at or after the meeting of an Award Board. Allegations made at an Award Board must be investigated as soon as practicable thereafter. In the meantime, the decision about the student's suspected misconduct must be deferred.
- 10.1.2 Where an offence is discovered after an Award Board has met and results have been published, the allegation must be referred directly to the Course Leader and the Curriculum Manager, who will consult with the Head of HE, Module Leader and Chair of the Award Board. They will take into account the nature of the evidence presented; the seriousness of the offence; the time which has elapsed; the reasons why it was not discovered earlier; and the regulations of any Awarding Organisation in determining whether or not to take action.

## **11 APPEALS**

- 11.1.1 The final decision on the penalty for an assessment/examination offence will rest with the Award Board. A student has the right to appeal by the deadline date indicated in the UCS HE Academic Appeals Policy. This is available on the UCS website.

## **12 REPORT TO THE SENATE**

- 12.1.1 The Head of HE will report to the Senate on the number of cases considered by the Panel of Investigation, detailing the number where the allegation was found to be true, the nature of the allegation in each such case and the penalty invoked. The report shall not name individual students and may be included within the annual UCS Self Evaluation Document as well as via the updates/minutes from sub-committees of the Senate.

## **13 REVIEW OF POLICY**

- 13.1.1 This policy will be reviewed at the date stated on the front by the SMT Policy Review Group in order to be signed off by SMT. Amendments to UCS HE policies are also reported to the Senate that oversees HE at UCS.

## **14 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT THIS POLICY RELATES TO**

- 14.1.1 This policy refers to or relates to:
- UCS HE Academic Appeals Policy
  - Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure



University  
Centre  
Somerset

Part of Bridgwater & Taunton College

## Appendix 1: **USE HEADED PAPER**

Date:

Dear

**Course:**

**Unit:**

We are writing to inform you that there is an allegation that you may have been involved in Academic Misconduct.

### PROVIDE DETAILS

As such your case will be investigated and forwarded to the University Centre Somerset Panel of Investigation. The panel will normally consider the case by electronic correspondence. However, if you wish to present information in person a panel meeting can be arranged.

The Panel will be held on **XXXXXX** at **XXXXXX** and will be attended by members of the Senate and curriculum team. Witnesses will also be invited to attend the Panel meeting if relevant. The Panel will review the evidence, and consider your statement if you provide one, and if they find a breach of the Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy, then a recommendation for an appropriate penalty will be made to the Award Board. If there is no breach, then the case will be dismissed and not recorded on your record.

If you wish to submit any supporting evidence or a statement to the panel then you must email this to [he@btc.ac.uk](mailto:he@btc.ac.uk) no later than **XXXXXX**.

Attached **to the email**, along with this letter is a copy of:

- Programme Student Handbook
- University Somerset Regulations for Validated Awards
- Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy. I would particularly like to draw your attention to sections 4 and 5.

Please refer to these documents if you are unsure about any aspect of the process.

We ask you to **complete the attached form and return to the HE Team Office, within 5 working days** (XXXXXXXXXX). This can be dropped into the office or emailed to [he@btc.ac.uk](mailto:he@btc.ac.uk).

Please note:

The final decision on any penalty for an assessment offence will rest with the Award Board. You have the right to appeal after the decision has been confirmed by the Award Board.

If you wish to appeal you must contact the HE Team within 10 days of receiving your results transcript and outcome letter.

Please be aware that appeals will only be considered on the following grounds:

- *there has been a material administrative error*
- *the assessments/examinations were not conducted in accordance with the current regulations for the programme or special arrangements formally agreed*
- *some other material irregularity relevant to the assessments has occurred*
- *in most exceptional circumstances the student has established to the satisfaction of the Academic Appeals Committee that performance in the assessment was adversely affected by illness or factors which the student was unable, or for valid reasons unwilling, to divulge before the Award Board reached their decision.*

The panel will consider the statement you may wish to provide along with any evidence, however if you wish to attend the meeting, please confirm this on the below form. If you wish to attend the meeting (you may only be invited to attend part of the meeting), you may wish to bring someone for moral support, this could be a fellow student, a member of the Students Union or a parent. The additional person is not permitted to represent or act on your behalf unless this is agreed prior to the Panel of Investigation.

Kind regards

**THE HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) TEAM**  
**University Centre Somerset**  
**Part of Bridgwater and Taunton College**  
**Tel: 01823 366536**  
**Email: [he@btc.ac.uk](mailto:he@btc.ac.uk)**

## Suspected Academic Misconduct Student Declaration Form

Please confirm in writing, using this form whether you believe you have or have not committed an offence as outlined in Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy (section 4).

Please return your completed form by email to [he@btc.ac.uk](mailto:he@btc.ac.uk) or you can submit the form at the HE Team office H301, located on the third floor of H Block.

**Student Name: XXXXXXXXXXXX**

**Course: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX**

If correspondence is not received from you by the deadline for a response (five working days), it will be assumed that you have accepted the allegation made and the case will be forwarded to the Panel.

Please tick the relevant boxes.

*Please see the Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy (section 4) for information about different types of Academic Misconduct.*

	Tick
I <b>believe</b> that I have committed Academic Misconduct	
I <b>do not believe</b> that I have committed Academic Misconduct	
I would like to submit evidence in mitigation, in the form of a written statement, for consideration by the Panel. I would like to attend the panel myself in person	
I wish to bring a friend (who may be a fellow student, staff member, SU officer or other party) and their name is  .....	
I will also be calling the following appropriate person or people to provide evidence and their names are:  .....  .....  I have arranged for their attendance at the meeting.	

Signature.....

Date.....

## Appendix 2:

### Suspected Academic Misconduct Panel Meeting Record

Student Name		Student Number	
Date		Programme	
Module		Level/Stage	
Module Leader		Chair	
Panel Members		Minute taker	

Alleged offence (tick each that applies)			
Plagiarism		Collusion	
Contract cheating		Self-plagiarism	
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations in carrying out research		Fabrication, falsification or misrepresentation	
Misconduct in examinations (describe)		Other (describe)	

Record of suspected academic misconduct, investigation and panel discussion
<p><i>The Panel will consider and record:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The magnitude of the advantage gained by the research misconduct, had it not been detected;</i></li> <li>• <i>The severity and extent of the research misconduct;</i></li> <li>• <i>The student's academic stage, in relation to the University's expectations about knowledge of good academic practice and personal responsibility;</i></li> <li>• <i>The number of previous offences. Second and subsequent offences should incur a penalty of at least one step above that appropriate for a first offence of the same character;</i></li> </ul>

Record of any previous Academic Misconduct offences

AMBeR Tariff Calculation	Points
History	
Amount / Extent	
Level / Stage	
Value of Assignment	
Additional Characteristics	
TOTAL POINTS =	

Outcome and any penalty to be recommended o the Award Board



## Appendix 3:

### Guidance to support the investigation of suspected academic misconduct

Suspected Academic Misconduct cases should always be investigated with care, integrity and concern for the student and the member of staff raising the concern. Queries about suspected Academic Misconduct or the process should be directed to the HE Team in the first instance.

This guidance describes how to gather evidence to submit to the Panel of Investigation. Always seek guidance from the HE Team before speaking to students about suspected academic misconduct.

The following are points to consider when gathering evidence about suspected academic misconduct:

- University Centre Somerset subscribes to advanced systems as a tool for the identification of academic misconduct.
- Quotation marks placed at either end of specific parts of student's work which is then inputted to Google is another useful tool in spotting suspected academic misconduct.
- Our staff may also identify suspected academic misconduct independently because of their subject knowledge.
- The style of the work changes throughout the assessment or the assessment differs significantly from previous assessments.
- Differences in font/formatting in parts of the assessment.
- Misuse/change of personal pronouns.
- Out of date references.
- Unusual references and/or bibliography.
- Considering work completed by other students on the course.
- Discuss concerns with the Module Leader or Course Leader.
- Research proposals that do not ring true or raise 'alarm bells'.
- Research that has different tenses used throughout, where it is unclear if research has been carried out or will be carried out.
- Examination of the assessment through standardisation or moderation
- Where appropriate (please check with the HE Team in the first instance to check whether it is appropriate) speak with the student about their assessment, asking questions such as:
  - Why they choose the topic
  - The content of the work (questions should be of an appropriate level to the module concerned)
  - What sources were used and why
  - Whether they had discussed their work or shared it with other people beforehand
  - Whether their approach to this assessment had been different to their usual approach and if so, why
  - Any other relevant questions

## Appendix 4:

### **Guidance to support the investigation of ghost writing/contract cheating (a form of plagiarism).**

Contract cheating/ghost writing refers to situations in which a student has commissioned or otherwise obtained a piece of work from a third party, such as an essay mill, and submits it for assessment as their own work.

This guidance describes how to gather evidence to submit to the Panel of Investigation, if contract cheating is suspected and conclusive documentary or other evidence is not available.

A number of factors might contribute to a suspicion of contract cheating, including: (a) A level and style of English significantly better and/or different to previous work or contributions in class

- (b) The style of the work changes throughout the assessment
- (c) Differences in font/formatting in parts of the assessment
- (d) Misuse/change of personal pronouns
- (e) Out of date/unusual references/bibliography

Procedure for investigating contract cheating

- (a) The marker should compare the assessment to one or two of the student's other assessments, if possible
- (b) The marker should discuss their findings with the module leader or 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)
  - The Faculty Registrar or nominee, to take notes of the meeting
- (d) The student should be asked to bring their notes used in the preparation of the assessment, any draft versions of the assessment and any readings they have used so that they can demonstrate how they worked on the assessment
- (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 assessment had been different to their usual approach
  - Any other relevant questions
- (g) Following the meeting, if the marker feels that there are grounds to suspect contract cheating, the module leader should be informed and the findings and notes of the meeting should be passed to the HE Team, who will make them available at any Panel of Investigation and/or Award Board.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.somerset.ac.uk/about/policies-regulations/university-of-plymouth/>