

3.2. Academic Offences

These Procedures should be read alongside the [General Provisions Relating to Academic Appeals, Conduct, Academic Offences, Student Complaints and Fitness to Practise](#).

1. General Principles

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 It is an academic offence for a student to commit an act whereby they gain or attempt to gain an unfair advantage.

1.1.2 Taught Modules: Where an academic offence is suspected to have been committed within a taught module the following Procedures may be invoked.

Postgraduate Research Students: Any allegation of plagiarism or duplication in unpublished work which is submitted by a postgraduate research student for assessment (via Annual Progress Review or oral examination) will be dealt with under these Procedures. Any other allegation of misconduct in research by a postgraduate research student will be dealt with under the Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research.

1.1.3 The Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences are set out in a flowchart in Annex 1.

1.2 Anonymous Reports

1.2.1 Anonymous reports of concerns will not normally be considered. However, where the report raises issues of serious concern, the University may take steps to investigate the matter.

1.2.2 Only in exceptional circumstances will the identity of the person reporting a concern be permitted to remain confidential, provided this is consistent with the principles of natural justice.

1.3 Suspension of Procedure Pending Fitness to Engage

If the student is deemed unfit to engage with the procedure, the University will suspend this procedure until such time that the student is deemed fit. Students deemed unfit to engage in the procedure will also be deemed unfit to study and will be required to take a period of temporary withdrawal until such time that they are deemed fit to return (see [1.20 of the Regulations for Students](#)).

1.4 Late Appeals

Appeals received after the specified deadlines will not normally be accepted. However, late appeals may be considered where a student demonstrates that they were unable to submit an appeal before the deadline due to circumstances beyond their control (e.g. hospitalisation). In such circumstances, students must submit a written statement with supporting evidence (e.g. medical documentation), to explain why they were unable to submit the appeal before the deadline, and why they are only now in a position to submit an appeal, together with the appeal documentation. The statement and any supporting evidence detailing reasons for a late appeal will be considered by the Head of Academic Affairs (or nominee), who will determine:

- i. That the student has evidenced sufficient cause for the late appeal to be accepted; or
- ii. That the student has not evidenced sufficient cause for the late appeal to be accepted and the appeal will not be considered. This decision is final; there is no further internal right of appeal. However, any student who feels aggrieved by the decision may make a complaint of maladministration to the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (see 10).

1.5 Withdrawal or Suspension of Student Prior to Conclusion of Any Action Under the Procedures

If a student withdraws or is withdrawn or suspended from the University during the course of an investigation or proceedings commenced under these Procedures, the University reserves the right to;

- i. Continue with the investigation in accordance with these Procedures, and to hear the allegation of an offence in the absence of the student without further notice, following their withdrawal or suspension; or
- ii. Suspend the procedure in the absence of the student following their withdrawal or suspension, and in the event that the student subsequently applies to the University for re-admission (following withdrawal), to recommence the investigation in accordance with these Procedures.

1.6 Deadlines/Timescales

The University will endeavour to meet all timescales set out in this Procedure. It may however prove impossible to meet these timescales when key staff are on leave, or otherwise indisposed, or where the complexities of the case warrant extended scrutiny. Where it is not possible for the University to meet the deadlines, for whatever reason, the student will be informed.

1.7 Scope of the Procedure: Minor and Major Offences

1.7.1 An offence shall normally be designated as 'minor' if the piece of work where it occurs counts towards one third or less of the assessment for the module. Suspected minor offences shall be dealt with at School level under the procedures set out in 4.

1.7.2 An offence shall be designated as 'major' if the piece of work where it occurs counts towards more than one third of the assessment for the module. Suspected major offences shall be dealt with under the procedure set out in 5.

1.7.3 The following alleged academic offences shall also be deemed a major offence:

- i. Any incidents of research misconduct by an undergraduate or a postgraduate taught student (see 2.8)
- ii. Any incidents of plagiarism or duplication in unpublished work submitted by a postgraduate research student for assessment (via Annual Progress Review or oral examination).
- iii. Any repeat or multiple offences.
- iv. Cheating in an examination, class test or laboratory test (see 2.1).
- v. Contract cheating (see 2.7).

2. Definitions of Academic Offences

The following list is not exhaustive; where the conduct of a student does not fit any of the following definitions, the student may be found to have committed an academic offence if they have gained or attempted to gain an unfair advantage or facilitated or attempted to facilitate another student to do so.

2.1 Cheating

The term 'cheating' normally describes behaviour that takes place in an examination, class test or laboratory test. It is considered to be cheating for a student to:

- i. Have any form of notes, or any items or texts other than those that are specifically permitted for that examination, at their desk in an examination hall during an examination, in a classroom during a class test, or in a laboratory during a laboratory test. It is the student's responsibility to establish what the permitted items are for each examination.
- ii. Make use or attempt to make use of unauthorised items as described above and/or any form of technology, including mobile telephones, smart phones, ear pieces (though not authorised hearing aids), cameras or other devices.
- iii. Copy or attempt to copy from another student's examination script, class test script or laboratory test script.
- iv. Obtain or attempt to obtain assistance from another student or from any other person which leads to an unfair advantage.
- v. Impersonate another student, or to allow themselves to be impersonated during an examination, class test or laboratory test.
- vi. Provide or attempt to provide unfair assistance to another student.
- vii. Permit another student to copy from their examination script, class test script or laboratory test script.
- viii. Knowingly assist any student to make use or attempt to make use of unfair means in a university examination.

2.2 Plagiarism: the presentation of the work of another as the writer's own.

2.3 Duplication: using or re-using significant, identical, or nearly identical portion(s) of their own work where such work has been previously submitted for credit within the University or at another institution.

2.4 Copying or Permitting Copying: copying another student's work or permitting another student to copy their work submitted for assessment. Both parties will be dealt with in accordance with these Procedures.

2.5 Collusion: where two or more students work together on an assignment that is meant to be done individually. It is expected that the work being assessed, unless specifically designated as a group assessment, shall be the work solely of the student submitting it.

2.6 Fabrication: where a student claims to have carried out experiments, interviews or any form of research which they have not in fact carried out, or where they invent or falsify data, evidence or experimental results. It is also an academic offence for a student to knowingly make use of falsified data as described above.

2.7 Contract Cheating: where a student commissions or seeks to commission (either paid or unpaid) another individual or artificial intelligence software tool to complete academic work on their behalf.

2.8 Research Misconduct

2.8.1 The University defines research misconduct as behaviour by any student in the conduct of research, whether intentional or not, that falls short of good scholarly standards. Misconduct in research covers inappropriate behaviour as well as misconduct in the course of research. Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- i. Plagiarism
- ii. Duplication
- iii. Collusion
- iv. Fabrication
- v. Falsification
- vi. Misrepresentation of data and/or interests and /or involvement
- vii. Breach of legislation
- viii. Failure to follow accepted procedures or to exercise due care in carrying out responsibilities for avoiding unreasonable risk or harm to:
 - a. humans
 - b. animals used in research
 - c. the environment
- ix. The proper handling of privileged or private information on individuals collected during the research
- x. Failure to ensure the appropriate ethical approval has been granted prior to commencing research
- xi. Contract cheating.

2.8.2 Honest error (which is not due to negligence), or differences of interpretation, are not included as misconduct in research. However, poor research practice may be considered misconduct, particularly where individual negligence results in harm or potential harm to research collaborators, participants or animals.

3. Discovery of Suspected Academic Offence

3.1 Cheating in an Examination

3.1.1 In this section, any reference to examination shall also include class test and laboratory test.

3.1.2 An invigilator who suspects a student of cheating in an examination, or who is made aware that a student may be cheating, shall inform the senior invigilator immediately.

3.1.3 The senior invigilator shall observe the student and make appropriate notes for a report, and may inform and consult the other invigilators about the incident.

3.1.4 The senior invigilator shall inform the student that they are suspected of cheating and that a report will be made. The invigilator shall record the incident on the student's examination script and shall remove and retain as evidence any unauthorised material in the student's possession. The student shall then be allowed to finish the examination. This procedure applies both to a student who is suspected of cheating and to any student who is suspected of having allowed their work to be copied or of having provided any form of assistance to facilitate unfair advantage.

3.1.5 At the end of the examination, the senior invigilator shall ask the student to remain and shall offer them the opportunity to explain their conduct and shall take a record of the discussion. The student shall be informed that a report will be made to the Examinations Office and to the Chair of the Board of Examiners. Failure to co-operate with the invigilator may be deemed to be a misconduct offence under the Conduct Regulations.

3.1.6 The senior invigilator shall make a written report, on the Senior Invigilator's Report Form, to the University's Examinations Office within one working day of the examination.

3.1.7 The University's Examinations Office shall, within two working days of receiving a written report, forward the report, any accompanying evidence and any other relevant documentation to the Chair of the Board of Examiners and shall copy it to the Head of the School. The Chair of the Board of Examiners shall ensure that the result is withheld until the investigation is completed, and will invoke the procedure for dealing with major offences as set out in 5.

3.2 Other Offences (see 2.2 – 2.8)

3.2.1 A member of staff who discovers a suspected academic offence in work that does not count towards the assessment of the module, or in drafts of work that have not yet been submitted for assessment, shall normally deal with this informally. This will involve re-advising the student of the academic conventions with regard to referencing, reporting of results, etc. applying in the discipline.

3.2.2 A member of staff who discovers a suspected academic offence in work submitted for assessment shall report the suspected offence in writing immediately.

3.2.3 Possible academic offences shall be reported as follows:

- i. in the case of taught modules, to the Head of School / Centre Director (or nominee) where the student is registered.
- ii. in the case of postgraduate research plagiarism or duplication in unpublished work submitted for assessment), to the Head of School / Centre Director (or nominee) where the student is registered.
- iii. in the case of postgraduate research students (in respect of any other academic offence), to the Head of School / Centre Director where the student is registered and to the Director of Research and Enterprise, for investigation under the [Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#).

3.2.4 With regards to 3.2.3 i and ii, the procedure set out in 4 shall be used for alleged minor offences; the procedure set out in 5 shall be used for alleged major offences.

4. Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Minor Offences

4.1 Initial Review

4.1.1 Allegations of minor offences shall normally be dealt with as an academic matter within the School, the main aim being to provide the student with the necessary advice and guidance to ensure that the problem does not recur.

4.1.2 The Head of School/ Centre Director (or nominee) will appoint a member of staff to conduct an initial review of the evidence provided; this will only involve the documentation provided by the member of staff who discovered the alleged breach. Upon completion of the initial review, the appointed member of staff will decide either:

- i. that there is insufficient evidence that an academic offence has been committed and no further action will be taken; or
- ii. that there is evidence of poor academic practice but not of an academic offence and that the student will be signposted to advice, guidance and additional learning resources; or
- iii. that it appears a minor academic offence may have taken place and that the case requires investigation (see 4.2).

4.2 Investigation Stage

4.2.1 The Head of School/Centre Director (or nominee) shall delegate responsibility for investigating alleged minor offences to a member of the relevant Board of Examiners ('the Investigating Officer'). The Investigating Officer will:

- i. Scrutinise the piece of work, and any documentary evidence provided by either the member of staff or the student.
- ii. Consult the member of staff who discovered the alleged offence.

- iii. Inform the student in writing that they are suspected of committing an academic offence. This communication shall specify the nature of the alleged academic offence (insofar as possible based on the evidence available at that time), identify the module or part of a module concerned, and include a copy of the Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences and a copy of any documentary evidence of the case against the student.
- iv. Interview the student about the alleged offence. The School shall normally give the student at least five working days' notice of the date and time of the meeting in writing. This period may be reduced during the examination period or at other times when tight timescales apply. Another member of the School's academic staff who is not directly involved in the case shall attend the interview to observe proceedings. At this interview, the student shall be re-advised of the academic conventions with regard to referencing, reporting of results, etc., applying in the discipline.

4.2.2 If the Investigating Officer decides that the offence appears to be a major one (see 1.11.2 – 1.11.3), they may refer it back to the Head of School/Centre Director or nominee at any time with a recommendation that the procedure for dealing with major offences be invoked.

4.2.3 If the alleged offence relates to collusion, each student involved shall be interviewed, following the procedure set out in 4.2.1. Students will be informed of the identify of all individuals with whom they are suspected to have colluded.

4.2.4 The Investigating Officer shall provide the Head of School/Centre Director or nominee with a report on the case. This will remain on the student's file until they graduate.

4.3 Head of School/ Centre Director: Decision and Penalty

4.3.1 The Head of School/Centre Director (or nominee) will consider the investigated case and come to a decision, taking account of the criteria outlined in 7.1.

4.3.2 The Head of School/Centre Director or nominee may:

- i. Find that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that an academic offence has been committed and dismiss the case;
- ii. Find that there is evidence of poor academic practice but not of an academic offence and direct that the student will be signposted to advice, guidance and additional learning resources; or
- iii. Find that a minor academic offence has been committed and impose one of the penalties set out in 7.2; or
- iv. Find that a major academic offence may have been committed and refer the case to the Chair of the relevant Board of Examiners to be considered under the procedures for major offences (see 5).

4.3.3 The decision of the Head of School/Centre Director or nominee shall be communicated to the student in writing, giving reasons for the decision. The Head of School/Centre Director or nominee will also advise the student of their right of appeal to the Academic Offences Committee (subject to 4.3.4), under 5.4, and will specify a deadline by which any appeal must be submitted. The stipulated date shall be ten working days after the date of notification of the decision of the Head of School/Centre Director or nominee.

4.3.4 A decision to refer a case to the Chair of the relevant Board of Examiners cannot be appealed.

4.3.5 Where a decision is made under 4.3.2(iii), and the student is subject to the Fitness to Practise Regulations, the School will consider whether those Regulations should be invoked.

5. Procedure for Dealing with Major Offences

5.1 Initial Review Stage

5.1.1 In the case of an allegation of a major academic offence, the Head of School/Centre Director (or nominee) shall report the matter to the Chair of the relevant Board of Examiners or Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (as appropriate).

5.1.2 Incidents of cheating in examinations (including class tests and laboratory tests) shall be reported to the Chair of the Board of Examiners by the University's Examinations Office.

5.1.3 Where the Chair of the Board of Examiners discovered the alleged offence, the Head of School/Centre Director (or nominee) will appoint another member of staff to investigate the allegation. Where the Head of School/Centre Director is the Chair of the Board of Examiners, they shall appoint another member of the Board of Examiners to investigate the allegation.

5.1.4 The Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) will appoint a member of staff to conduct an initial review of the evidence provided; this will only involve the documentation provided by the member of staff who discovered the alleged breach. Upon completion of the initial review, the appointed member of staff will decide either:

- i. that there is insufficient evidence that an academic offence has been committed and no further action will be taken; or
- ii. that there is evidence of poor academic practice but not of an academic offence and that the student will be signposted to advice, guidance and additional learning resources; or
- iii. that it appears a major academic offence may have taken place and that the case requires investigation (see 5.2).

5.2 Investigation Stage

5.2.1 Following initial review, and normally within five working days of receiving a report on an alleged major offence, the Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) shall arrange for a Panel, consisting of at least two members of the Board of Examiners/School Postgraduate Research Committee and a representative from outside the School, to review the evidence and to meet the student to discuss the alleged major offence.

5.2.2 In circumstances where the alleged major offence, other than those covered in 2.1, is discovered during the revision or assessment period, initial contact with the student may be by means other than in writing, provided this is followed up in writing.

5.2.3 The School shall normally give the student at least five working days' notice of the date and time of the meeting with the Panel. During the assessment period, when tight time constraints apply, the period of notice may be reduced.

5.2.4 Prior to the Panel meeting, the student shall be informed in writing that:

- i. they are suspected of committing a major academic offence. The student will be informed of the nature of the alleged offence (insofar as possible based on the evidence available at that time) and the module, part of a module or piece of unpublished work concerned
- ii. They have a right to be accompanied to the Panel meeting.
- iii. They have a right to make a written submission to the Panel and to submit supporting documentary evidence, in addition to appearing in person.

The student will also be provided with a copy of these Procedures and a copy of any documentary evidence of the case against the student.

5.2.5 Where a student is suspected of contract cheating, prior to the Panel meeting, the student may be required to undergo a short viva voce with a member(s) of staff with knowledge of the subject area in order to determine the student's level of knowledge of the subject area. The student should also be asked to submit drafts of their work to show progression. Work previously submitted by the student may be compared to the piece of work in which the contract cheating is suspected to compare writing style. The member(s) of staff shall prepare a report for the Panel which will be shared with the student prior to the Panel meeting.

5.2.6 If the alleged offence relates to collusion, all the students involved shall be invited to Panel meetings. Students will be informed of the identity of all individuals with whom they are suspected to have colluded.

5.2.7 The student will be required to attend the Panel meeting. Where a student fails to attend the Panel meeting without good cause, the Panel may consider the case and forward a recommendation to the Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) in the absence of the student and without further notice. It is the responsibility of the student to establish good cause to the satisfaction of the Panel.

5.2.8 The Panel shall have the right to call for such papers, examine witnesses and conduct other relevant enquiries as appear necessary. Where witnesses are called, they may be subject to examination, cross-examination and re-examination by the parties.

5.2.9 Having completed its investigation, the Panel shall make a written report to the Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee), to be accompanied by all supporting documentation (including any provided by the student). This report shall summarise the Panel's investigation and indicate that either:

- i. There is insufficient evidence that an offence has been committed and that the Panel recommends that the case is dismissed, and that no further action should be taken; or
- ii. An offence has been committed and that the Panel recommends a penalty from among the list of penalties for major offences, as set out in 7.3 and 7.4.

If the Panel indicates that an offence has been committed, the Panel may also recommend that the matter be referred for consideration under the [Conduct Regulations](#) or the [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#).

5.3 Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee: Decision and Penalty

5.3.1 The Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) shall consider the Panel's report and shall consult as necessary, including consulting other relevant members of the Board of Examiners/School Postgraduate Research Committee.

5.3.2 Following this consultation, the Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) shall do one of the following:

- i. Dismiss the case, notwithstanding the finding and recommendation(s) of the Panel; or
- ii. Dismiss the case where there is evidence of poor academic practice but not of an academic offence and signpost the student to advice, guidance and additional learning resources; or
- iii. Confirm the finding and the penalty recommended by the Panel; or
- iv. Confirm the finding and impose a different penalty from among those set out in the list of penalties, as set out in 7.3 and 7.4
- v. Refer the case for consideration under the [Conduct Regulations](#) or the [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#).

5.3.3 The decision of the Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) shall take into account the criteria outlined in 7.1.

5.3.4 The decision of the Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) shall be communicated to the student in writing normally within eight working days of the decision being made. This communication shall:

- i. Set out the allegations against the student.
- ii. Detail the Chair's decision relating to each allegation, giving reasons for the decision. Where appropriate, the University Examinations Office shall also be informed of the decision.
- iii. Advise the student of their right to appeal (subject to 5.3.5 and 5.3.6), under 5.4, and specify the deadline by which an appeal must be submitted, which date shall be ten working days after the date of notification of the decision.

5.3.5 There shall be no appeal against a referral to the Academic Offences Committee (see 7.3 i and 7.4 iii).

5.3.6 There is no right of appeal against a referral for investigation under the [Conduct Regulations](#) and/or the [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#).

5.4 Appeals Against a Decision of a Relevant Chair

5.4.1 In this section, the term 'Relevant Chair' shall be defined as the Head of School / Centre Director / Chair of the Board of Examiners / Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) who made the decision in relation to the minor or major offence.

5.4.2 Subject to 4.3.4 and 5.3.5-5.3.6, a student may appeal to the Academic Offences Committee (AOC) against the decision of a Relevant Chair. The appeal must be submitted on the Appeal to the Academic Offences Committee Form to the Appeals, Conduct and Complaints Team (appeals@qub.ac.uk) within ten working days of the written notification of the decision of the Relevant Chair.

5.4.3 Students may appeal on any of the following grounds:

- i. Substantial and relevant new evidence has become available which the student could not reasonably have obtained in time to present for consideration by the Relevant Chair, which has had a material effect on the outcome, making it unsound.
- ii. There was a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the investigation and/or in the decision of the Relevant Chair which has had a clear and demonstrable impact on the outcome.

Dissatisfaction with the outcome does not itself constitute grounds of appeal.

5.4.4 Where the student believes that the decision of the Relevant Chair is too severe or inappropriate, this must be supported by demonstration of one of the specified grounds of appeal.

5.4.5 Sifting and Review

5.4.5.1 If, on receipt of the student's appeal, it is not clear that the student has presented sufficient evidence and /or a sufficiently compelling case, the student's appeal form and any supporting documentation submitted by the student before the AOC deadline will be considered by two senior members of staff (the Sifting Panel), who shall decide whether:

- v. the student has presented sufficient evidence and / or a sufficiently compelling case; or
- vi. the student has not presented sufficient evidence and / or a sufficiently compelling case; for example*,
 - i. does not cite a ground of appeal

- j. clearly does not meet grounds
- k. fails to submit necessary supporting documentation (e.g. medical evidence) before the AOC deadline
- l. requests an outcome which is not within the remit of the AOC to grant.

*The list is not exhaustive.

5.4.5.2 If the appeal submitted by the student is determined not to present sufficient evidence and / or a sufficiently compelling case, then the appeal will be rejected at this stage.

5.4.5.3 If the appeal is rejected at this stage, the appeal will be reviewed by two senior members of staff (the Review Panel) who will either confirm the sifting decision or overturn the sifting decision. No further documentation will be accepted at this stage and the decision of the Review Panel shall be final. There is no further appeal against this decision, as the decision is made on the basis of the evidence presented at the time, where only the opinion of the Review Panel suffices.

5.4.5.4 The student will be notified in writing, using their University email address, whether or not their appeal will proceed to be considered by an AOC.

5.4.5.5 If it is deemed that the student has presented sufficient evidence and / or a sufficiently compelling case, the appeal will be sent by the Appeals and Complaints Team to the student's School for a response and a meeting of the AOC will be convened to hear the appeal. The decision to refer the appeal to the AOC should not be taken as an indication that the appeal will be upheld.

6. Academic Offences Committee (AOC)

6.1 In this section, the term 'Relevant Chair' shall be defined as the Head of School / Centre Director / Chair of the Board of Examiners / Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee).

6.2 The AOC shall meet to consider cases referred by the Board of Examiners, Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) and appeals by students against decisions of a Relevant Chair.

6.3 The membership of the AOC shall normally be drawn from a Panel of members from across the University, the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College. The AOC will be chaired by a senior member of University staff.

6.4 A quorum shall normally comprise the Chair plus at least two members, to include normally one representative from each of the Faculties.

6.5 Where the student is studying at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, membership of the AOC will include, in addition, one member of the Inn of Court of Northern Ireland and one member of the Law Society of Northern Ireland nominated by the Council of Legal Education.

6.6 A member of staff from Academic Services shall act as Secretary to the AOC. Minutes shall be taken and retained as a formal record of the meeting.

6.7 The student shall be invited to attend the meeting of the AOC to present their case. The student shall receive at least five working days' notice in writing of the date and time of the meeting. Ahead of the meeting, the student will be provided with a copy of the paperwork to be considered by the AOC. The student may make a written submission to the AOC and may submit supporting documentary evidence, in addition to appearing in person.

6.8 The Relevant Chair (or nominee) shall be invited to attend the meeting to explain the reasons for the School's decision. Where both attend the meeting, the student and the School representative shall each be present while the other is speaking.

6.9 The student will be required to attend the meeting of the AOC. Where a student fails to attend the meeting without good cause, the AOC may consider the case in the absence of the student and without further notice. It is the responsibility of the student to establish good cause to the satisfaction of the AOC.

6.10 The meeting of the AOC may proceed in the absence of the School representative, with the student in attendance.

6.11 Referrals to AOC

6.11.1 The AOC will consider the case and come to a decision, taking account of the criteria outlined in 7.1.

6.11.2 Where a case has been referred by the Chair of a Board of Examiners/Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee), the options available to the AOC are as follows:

- i. To find that there is insufficient evidence that an academic offence had been committed and dismiss the case against the student; or
- ii. To find that an academic offence has been committed and impose a penalty from among those set out in 7.3-7.5.

6.11.3 If it is deemed that an offence has been committed, the Panel may also refer the matter for consideration under the Conduct Regulations.

6.12 Appeals to AOC

6.12.1 In considering appeals, the AOC shall not attempt to re-assess student's work or to question the examiners' academic judgement.

6.12.2 Where an appeal has been brought by a student against a decision of a Relevant Chair (or nominee), the options available to the Academic Offences Committee are as follows:

- i. To uphold the appeal and rescind the penalty imposed by the Relevant Chair;
- ii. To dismiss the appeal and confirm the penalty imposed by the Relevant Chair;
- iii. To uphold the appeal in part and impose a different penalty from among those set out in the list of penalties open to the AOC (see 7.3-7.5). The penalty imposed shall not be more severe than the original penalty imposed.

6.13 The student and Relevant Chair (or nominee) shall be informed of the outcome of the meeting of the AOC, in writing, normally within eight working days of the decision being made.

6.14 Where the AOC has been convened to hear a referral to AOC, the student's right to appeal a decision of the AOC (subject to 6.15) shall also be stated in the communication.

6.15 There is no right of appeal against a referral for investigation under the Conduct Regulations.

6.16 Where the AOC has been convened to hear an appeal against the decision made by the Relevant Chair, this decision is final and there is no further internal right of appeal. However, a student may make a complaint about maladministration in the procedure to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman within six months of notification of the final decision (see 10).

6.17 The Relevant Chair (or nominee) shall ensure that the student's assessment results are dealt with in accordance with the decision of the AOC.

7 Penalties for Academic Offences

7.1 Criteria

At all stages, the following criteria will be taken into account in deciding the level of penalty to be imposed or other action to be taken:

- i. The extent of the plagiarism or other academic offence.
- ii. The degree of intent.
- iii. The level of study and previous educational background of the student.
- iv. Any previous history of having committed an academic offence.
- v. The extent of the student's knowledge and understanding of the concept of academic misconduct and of the correct procedures for referencing in the discipline; and
- vi. The impact of the penalty on the student's progress or award.

7.2 Minor Offences: Penalties Available

After following the procedures set out in 4 the following penalties may be applied:

- i. A written warning to the student;
- ii. Declare the relevant work submitted as null and void and permit the student to re-do the component (for that attempt) with no further penalty (i.e. the full mark obtained is allowed to stand);
- iii. Declare the relevant work submitted as null and void and permit the student to re-do the component (for that attempt) for a maximum of the pass mark; or
- iv. Award a mark of zero for the component but not permit the student to re-do it for that attempt. The offer of a resit attempt will be considered in line with relevant study regulations (including programme specific regulations). If a resit is granted, the resit attempt will be capped at the pass mark, for degree classification purposes.

7.3 Major Offences: Penalties Available to the Chair of the Board of Examiners

- i. After following the procedures set out in 5 above, the Chair of the Board of Examiners (or nominee) may impose a penalty detailed in 7.2 or the Chair of the Board of Examiners (or nominee) may refer the matter to the AOC.

7.4 Major Offences: Penalties Available to the Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee

The Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) may impose a penalty for plagiarism or duplication in unpublished work submitted by a postgraduate research student for assessment (via Annual Progress Review or oral examination) from the following list, after following the procedures set out in 5 above:

- i. A written warning to the student;
- ii. Direct that the offending material be removed from the work submitted and that the student carry out such further work as is necessary to replace it; or
- iii. Refer the matter to the AOC.

7.5 Major Offences: Penalties Available to the Academic Offences Committee

The AOC may impose a penalty from 7.2 and 7.4.1 i – ii. Alternatively, one of the following penalties may be imposed:

- i. Declare the relevant work submitted in more than one module as null and void and permit the student to re-do the components (at that attempt) with no further penalty (i.e. the full mark obtained is allowed to stand); or
- ii. Declare the relevant work submitted in more than one module as null and void and permit the student to re-do the components (at that attempt) for a maximum of the pass mark; or
- iii. Award a mark of zero for the components of the modules and not permit the student to re-do them at that attempt*; or
- iv. In the case of a postgraduate research student, refer the matter back to the School to provide the student with support and guidance;
- v. In the case of a postgraduate research student, recommend to the examiners that no degree be awarded.
- vi. Suspend the student; or
- vii. Require the student to withdraw from the University.

* The offer of a resit attempt will be considered in line with relevant Study Regulations (including programme specific regulations). If a resit is granted, the resit attempt will be capped at the pass mark, for degree classification purposes.

7.6 Fitness to Practise

7.6.1 Where a penalty (7.2-7.5) is imposed and the student is subject to the Fitness to Practise Regulations, the School will consider whether those Regulations should be invoked.

8 Appeals Against the Decision of an Academic Offences Committee

8.1 A student may appeal a decision of an AOC to an Academic Offences Appeals Committee (AOAC) only where the matter has been referred to the AOC directly by the Chair of the Board of Examiners (or nominee) or the Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee) (see 7.3 i and 7.4.1 iii).

8.2 An appeal against the decision of the AOC must be submitted by the student in writing on the Appeal to the Academic Offences Appeal Committee Form to the Appeals, Conduct and Complaints Team (appeals@qub.ac.uk) by the time and date stipulated in the letter giving the decision of the AOC. The stipulated date shall be ten working days after notification of the decision of the AOC.

8.3 The student may appeal on one or more of the following grounds:

- i. Substantial and relevant new evidence has become available which the student could not have reasonably obtained in time to present for consideration by the AOC, which has had a material effect on the outcome, making it unsound. There was a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the investigation and/or the conduct of the AOC proceedings, which has had a clear and demonstrable impact on the outcome;

Dissatisfaction with the outcome does not itself constitute grounds of appeal.

8.4 Where the student believes that the decision of the Relevant Chair is too severe or inappropriate, this must be supported by demonstration of one of the specified grounds of appeal.

8.5 If it is not clear that the student has presented sufficient evidence and / or a sufficiently compelling case, the

student's appeal and any supporting documentation submitted by the student before the AOAC deadline will be considered in accordance with the Sifting/Review process (see 5.4.5).

9 Academic Offences Appeals Committee (AOAC)

9.1 In this section, the term 'Relevant Chair' shall be defined as the Head of School / Centre Director / Chair of the Board of Examiners / Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (or nominee).

9.2 When convened, the AOAC shall be drawn from the membership as outlined in 6.3 and 6.5 and shall be chaired by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor (or nominee).

9.3 At all meetings of the AOAC three members shall constitute a quorum.

9.4 A member of Academic Services shall normally act as Secretary to the AOAC. Minutes shall be taken and retained as a formal record of the meeting.

9.5 The AOAC shall have access to the record of the AOC meeting.

9.6 The student shall be invited to attend the meeting in person to present their appeal. The student shall receive at least five working days' notice in writing of the date and time of the meeting. Ahead of the meeting the student will be provided with a copy of the paperwork to be considered by the AOAC.

9.7 The Chair of the AOC (or nominee) shall be invited to attend the meeting to explain the reasons for the decision of the AOC and the decision to refer the matter to the AOC respectively. Where they are each in attendance, the student, and either or both of the Chair of the AOC (or nominee) and the Relevant Chair (or nominee) shall be present while the other is speaking.

9.8 Where a student fails to attend the meeting without good cause, the AOAC may consider the case in the absence of the student and without further notice. It is the responsibility of the student to establish good cause to the satisfaction of the AOAC.

9.9 The meeting of the AOAC may proceed in the absence of the Chair of the AOC (or nominee) with only the student in attendance.

9.10 The AOAC shall have the authority to:

- i. Uphold the appeal and rescind the penalty imposed by the AOC.
- ii. Confirm the penalty imposed by the AOC.
- iii. Impose a different penalty from among those detailed in 7.5. The penalty imposed shall not be more severe than the original penalty imposed.

9.11 The student, the Chair of the AOC and the relevant Head of School / Centre Director will be advised of the outcome of the meeting, in writing normally within eight working days of the decision being made. The Head of School / Centre Director shall ensure that the student's assessment results are dealt with in accordance with the decision of the AOAC.

9.12 The decision of the AOAC shall be final and there is no further internal right of appeal. However, a student may make a complaint about maladministration in the procedure to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman within six months of notification of the final decision (see 10).

10 Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Upon notification of the University's final internal decision, a student may submit a complaint about maladministration in the procedure to the [Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman](#) within six months of notification of the University's final decision.

11 Monitoring

11.1 Heads of School shall provide the Director of Academic Services with a report, at the end of each academic year, of all major and minor offences dealt with in the School under this Procedure.

11.2 The Director of Academic Services shall make an annual report on academic offences, including those considered by the AOC and the AOAC as well as those dealt with by Schools and Centres, to the relevant academic governance committee. Individual students shall not be identified in the report.

12 Further Information

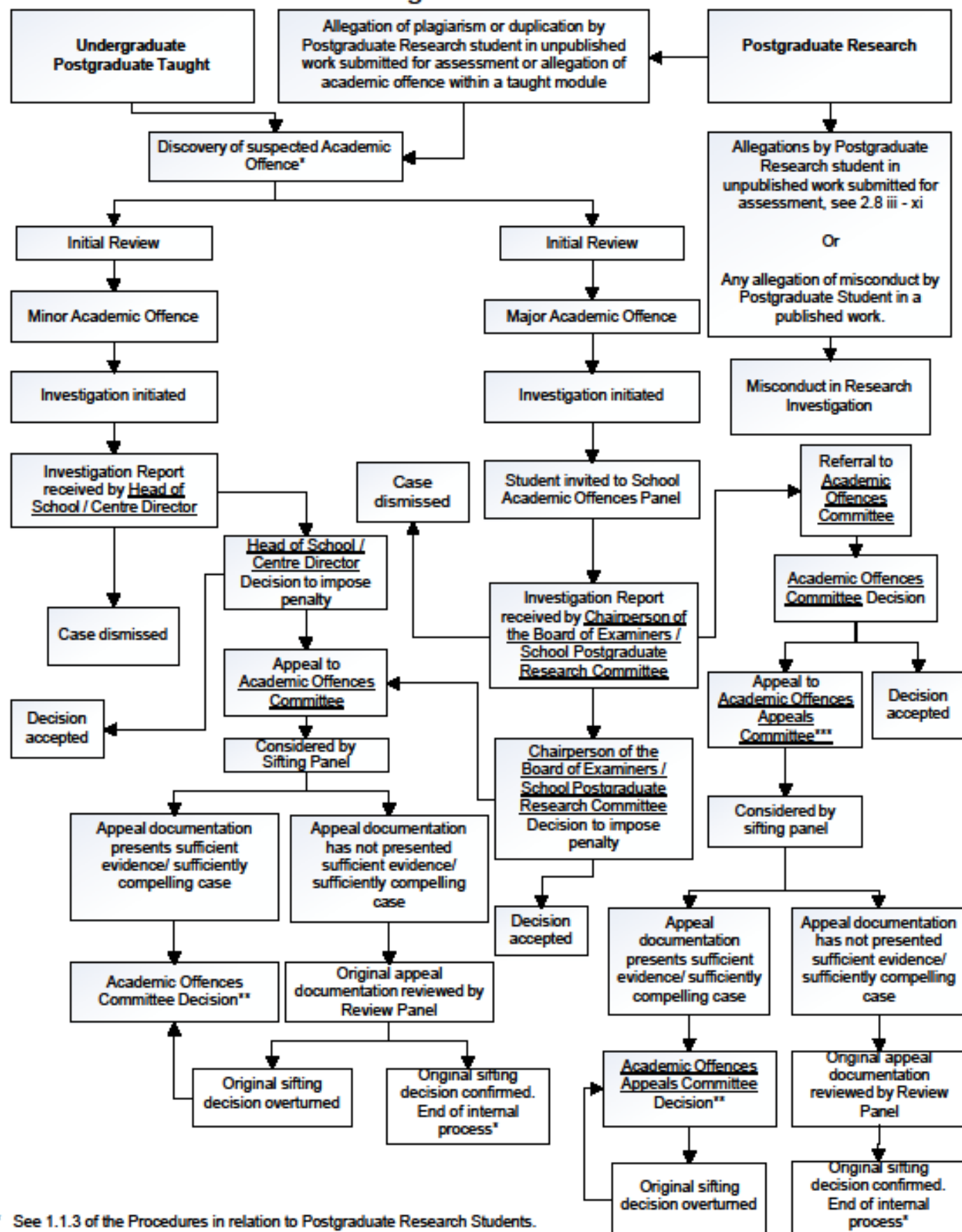
Advice on this procedure may be obtained from The Appeals and Complaints Team (email: appeals@gub.ac.uk).

13 Forms

[Appeal to the Academic Offences Committee Form](#)

[Appeal to the Academic Offences Appeal Committee Form](#)

Annex 1: Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences



* See 1.1.3 of the Procedures in relation to Postgraduate Research Students.

** No further right of appeal internal to the University, however, a student may make a complaint about maladministration to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman <https://nipso.org.uk/nipso/> within six months of notification of the University's final decision.

*** A student may appeal to the Academic Offences Appeals Committee only where the matter was referred to the Academic Offences Committee directly by the Chair of the Board of Examiners.