

St George's, University of London

**Procedure for considering allegations of Assessment Irregularity
2021-22**

Approved by Senate 1 September 2021

1 Introduction and Definitions

- 1.1 This procedure applies to assessment offences as defined in **paragraph 12.1** of the General Regulations for Students and Programmes of Study, and is applicable to all students registered on programmes of study at St George's, University of London.
- 1.2 If, after a diploma or certificate of St George's has been awarded, there is an allegation of assessment irregularity, this shall be dealt with under this procedure. The Principal or Principal's nominee may, after this procedure has been followed, and on the recommendation of Council, revoke any diploma or certificate granted by St George's and all privileges connected therewith.
- 1.3 An assessment offence shall be considered to be any attempt by a student to gain improper advantage in an assessment (whether in a supervised assessment or in work undertaken in the candidate's own time such as essays or reports or dissertations) or to assist another candidate to gain an advantage or to disrupt an assessment.
- 1.4 Allegations of assessment irregularity made against St George's staff shall not be taken forward under this procedure, but shall be referred to the Human Resources Department.
- 1.5 In this procedure, any named officer may delegate her or his responsibilities to another member of St George's staff; similarly, the procedure shall not be invalidated by an officer of St George's acting in the place of another named in these regulations where circumstances make this expedient.
- 1.6 Students subject to this procedure may wish to obtain guidance and support from the President or Vice-President (Education and Welfare) of the Students' Union or from their personal tutor(s).
- 1.7 Students are advised to respond to all communication from the University (verbal and written) directly and not normally through a third party except in exceptional circumstances where diagnosed disability reasonably prevents them from being able to do so.

2 Process for Considering Assessment Offences defined in the General Regulations Paragraphs 12(a) to (c), (e) to (g) and (i) to (l)

- 2.1 Paragraph 2 applies for the consideration of the offences contained within Table 1 (below).

Table 1

Failure to observe the <i>Rules for the conduct of candidates in supervised examinations</i> .
<i>Cheating:</i> (i) The introduction into a supervised assessment room (including practical and clinical assessments) and/or the use of books, notes, electronic documents or materials accessed over the internet, instruments, calculators or other materials or aids, unless expressly authorised by the examiners; (ii) the submission of any work in a supervised assessment undertaken prior to that assessment; (iii) copying the work of another candidate; (iv) passing any information to another candidate or to any other person outside an assessment room unless expressly so authorised by the examiners.
<i>Copying and collusion:</i> (i) copying the work of another candidate with or without that candidate's knowledge; (ii) representing as the work of a single candidate a piece of work which two or more students have undertaken together, without express permission to do so from the examiners.
<i>Bribery:</i> Offering payment or other inducement to another person or threatening another person in order to gain improper advantage in an assessment or to falsify the result of an assessment.
<i>Substitution:</i> Commissioning another person to undertake all or part of an assignment presented as the candidate's own work, or knowingly undertaking work for another candidate to present as his or her own work.
<i>Impersonation:</i> Sitting an assessment or test in place of another candidate or knowingly allowing another person to sit an assessment or test in the candidate's own place.
<i>Fabrication:</i> Presenting data in reports or projects as based on work undertaken by the candidate which have been invented by the candidate, altered, copied or obtained by improper means.
<i>Deception:</i> Making a false declaration in order to receive special consideration by a Board of Examiners, such as an extension to a deadline.
<i>Aiding and abetting</i> another student in any of the above.
<i>Any other dishonest practice</i> in assessment not included above intended to secure improper advantage or to assist another student to secure an improper advantage or to subvert the fair and proper conduct of an assessment.

- 2.2 An alleged assessment offence under this paragraph shall be reported in writing to the Academic Registrar or his/her nominee, normally a member of the Student Conduct and Compliance Team.
- 2.3 On receipt of an allegation against a student, the Academic Registrar or his/her nominee shall write to the student to inform him or her of the allegation and provide details of any evidence. The student shall be invited to make a written statement, provide any supporting evidence, and to say whether or not he/she admits the allegation within 15 working days.
- 2.4 Where no response is received from a student within 15 working days of the date of sending the letter referred to in the preceding paragraph, and where the Academic Registrar or his/her nominee is satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken to contact the student, the student shall be deemed to have admitted the allegation and asked that it be dealt with in her or his absence.

- 2.5 Where the student admits or is deemed to admit to an allegation, the Academic Registrar or his/her nominee shall, save where paragraph 2.6 is of relevance, apply a penalty in accordance with paragraph 2.11.
- 2.6 Where the student contests the allegation made against him or her, there are complicating factors warranting further investigation, or where expulsion is to be considered, the Academic Registrar or his/her nominee shall appoint an Investigating Officer in accordance with paragraph 2.7.
- 2.7 The Academic Registrar or his/her nominee shall, where required under paragraph 2.6, promptly appoint a disinterested member of senior staff to act as the Investigating Officer. The Academic Registrar shall also inform the Student Conduct and Compliance Team, a member of which shall act as the Clerk in such matters. Within 5 working days of the appointment, the Student Conduct and Compliance Team shall inform the student in writing of the identity of the Investigating Officer and confirm the reason for his/her appointment.
- 2.8 The Investigating Officer shall refer to and conduct his/her investigation in accordance with the "*Investigating Officer Protocol*".
- 2.9 The role of the Investigating Officer is to make further enquiries to determine whether assessment irregularity has occurred and/or the circumstances surrounding the offence and save in exceptional circumstances, to prepare a written report for the Academic Registrar within 15 working days of his/her appointment. Where the allegation of assessment irregularity is disputed, the standard of proof required under this procedure shall be on the balance of probabilities.
- 2.10 The Investigating Officer shall detail the results of the investigation and recommend a penalty as prescribed in paragraph 2.11.
- 2.11 The penalties that may be applied include the following:
- a. No action to be taken.
 - b. A formal written admonishment which will sit on the student's file, which may or may not be disclosed to third parties.
 - c. A formal written warning about a student's future conduct, which shall sit on the student's file and which may or may not be disclosed to third parties.
 - d. Cancellation of a student's marks in one or more assessments or other tests.
 - e. Cap on the student's assessment result/s at the pass mark.
 - f. Delayed entry to assessments or other tests, for a specific period of time.
 - g. Expulsion from St George's.

The following option may also be recommended for medical students in Penultimate Year, Transition Year or Final Year where misconduct has been established which calls the student's fitness to study and practise into question:

- h. Referral for consideration by a Hearing Committee under the *Procedure for Consideration of Fitness to Study or Practise*. The outcomes available to the Hearing Committee are set out in Paragraph 3.4.1 of the *Procedure for Consideration of Fitness to Study or Practise*.
- 2.12 Penalties a-g may be applied singly or in combination. Option h is applied as an independent measure.

- 2.13 The Investigating Officer shall decide whether it is expected that students will declare any penalty to a professional body (GMC, HCPC, NMC) or current or future employer. This decision will take into consideration any guidance issued by the relevant professional regulatory body. Please note, medical students who are referred to a Fitness to Study and Practise Hearing Committee in accordance with option h will be expected to declare this fact, automatically, to any professional body (including the GMC) as part of any future registration, and to any other external party (for example, an employer) should they be asked.
- 2.14 Upon receipt of the report prepared by the Investigating Officer, the Principal or Academic Registrar shall consider the findings and recommendations of the Investigating Officer and confirm the penalty to be applied.
- 2.15 The Academic Registrar or his/her nominee shall within 5 working days of the penalty being determined, provide the student with a copy of the report prepared by the Investigating Officer and a letter outlining any sanctions, penalties or referrals applied under the Procedure. The letter will be sent to the postal address of the student, as recorded on the Student Record System. The student shall be informed of how long the details of the case will remain on their file and whom within or outside the institution will be informed of the case.
- 2.16 Where a student does not co-operate with the investigation and/or respond to the allegations made against him/her and where the Academic Registrar or his/her nominee is satisfied that reasonable steps have been taken to contact the student, the student shall be deemed to have admitted the allegation and asked that it be dealt with in his/her absence.
- 2.17 A student has a right of appeal in accordance with the provisions set out below in paragraph 4.

3 Process for Considering Assessment Offences defined in the General Regulations Paragraphs 12(d) and (h)

- 3.1 Paragraph 3 applies for the consideration of the offences contained within Table 2.

Table 2

<p><i>Plagiarism:</i> Representing another person's work (whether published or unpublished) as the candidate's own, without acknowledgement of the source. Examples of plagiarism include: (i) including in a student's own work more than a single phrase from the work of another person without the use of quotation marks and acknowledgement of the source; (ii) summarising another person's work by changing a few words or altering the format or order of presentation without acknowledgement; (iii) using the ideas of another person or data gathered by another person without acknowledging the source; (iv) copying the work of another person (e.g. a book, article, or the work of another present or past student); (v) using and presenting as the candidate's own, material prepared by another person and stored on computer disk or downloaded from the Internet.</p>

<p><i>Re-submission of assessed work:</i> Including in any coursework material which is identical or substantially similar to material which has already been assessed at St George's or elsewhere, either by the same candidate or another (e.g. the use of essay banks).</p>
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- 3.2 The marker and/or Module Organiser shall normally use text-matching software to assist with the detection of unoriginal work (with the exception of doctoral level theses), although Turnitin originality reports and similarity scores shall be used solely as a guide when assessing the level of plagiarism in a student's work. Turnitin similarity scores shall be used by the marker/Module Organiser as an indicator only; similarity scores shall not necessarily equate to degrees of plagiarism.
- 3.3 The marker and/or the Module Organiser shall use his/her/their academic judgement to identify whether plagiarism has occurred. The marker and/or Module Organiser may choose to interview the student where he/she/they require/s further information prior to making a judgement about a case.
- 3.4 Where the marker and/or Module Organiser conclude/s that plagiarism has occurred, he/she/they shall refer the matter to the Moderation Team.
- 3.5 The Moderation Team shall refer to the tariff contained within **Appendix A** of this procedure and use their academic judgement to determine the penalty to be applied. The Moderation Team is able to take into consideration mitigation affecting the assessment when determining a penalty.
- 3.6 The Moderation Team shall consist of at least three members of academic staff from the following:
- a) Module Organiser or Lead (or deputy)
 - b) Year Lead (or deputy)
 - c) Year Examiner
 - d) Chief Examiner
 - e) Course Director
 - f) An academic member of staff nominated by the Course Director
- 3.7 Within 5 working days of moderation, the student shall receive written confirmation from the Moderation Team of the penalty applied. This penalty shall be provisional pending ratification by the Board of Examiners.
- 3.8 Where a student has, for good reason, been unable to make the Moderation Team aware of mitigating circumstances, as prescribed in **paragraph 3.5**, the student shall be permitted to submit mitigating circumstances in writing to the Course Director within 5 working days of the provisional result being notified, which shall be reviewed by the Board of Examiners. Reports of mitigation should be accompanied by evidence that the student wishes to rely upon.
- 3.9 The student shall receive written confirmation of their ratified result by the Examinations Manager or his/her nominee within 20 working days of the Board of Examiners' meeting. This shall include confirmation of any penalty applied.
- 3.10 A senior administrator for the student's programme of study or his/her nominee shall record any incidence of assessment irregularity on the student's file within 10 working days of the result being ratified.
- 3.11 The assessment irregularity outcome letters should be copied to the student's Personal Tutor so that he/she is able to provide appropriate support to the student and/or refer the student for appropriate study support.

- 3.12 Course Directors or their nominees shall make an annual report to the Head of Student Conduct and Compliance of the number of students found to have committed a plagiarism offence. This report shall include a brief description of all plagiarism offences and the penalties awarded.

4 Notification of outcome and appeal procedure

- 4.1. A student may appeal the decision of the Principal, Academic Registrar or the Board of Examiners if one or more of the following can be shown to apply:
- a) That there is new evidence bearing on the facts of the matter that could not reasonably have been presented or known during the consideration of the case.
 - b) That there was a procedural irregularity of sufficient weight during the operation of the earlier stages of the Assessment Irregularity Procedure that to suggest that the decision would not have been the same had the irregularity not occurred.
 - c) That the decision applied was manifestly unreasonable.
- 4.2. A student wishing to appeal shall write to the Director of Governance, Legal and Assurance Services setting out the grounds for appeal. These shall be considered by the Chair of Council; if, in the Chair of Council's view, one or more of the grounds above is shown to apply, an Appeals Committee shall be established in accordance with the provisions of the Student Appeals Committee Procedure.
- 4.3. A student wishing to appeal must lodge her or his appeal with the Director of Governance, Legal and Assurance Services within 10 days of the date of the letter advising her/him of the penalty. Students should write a short, focused statement setting out the grounds for the appeal and should only include any new evidence that has not been previously presented and which supports the written statement.

5 Completion of Procedure

- 5.1 The decision of the Chair of Council not to appoint an Appeals Committee, or any decision made by an appointed Appeals Committee on behalf of the Council, shall be final and shall conclude St George's internal procedures. The Director of Governance, Legal and Assurance Services will inform the student in writing and issue a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter within 10 working days of this decision being taken.

6 Interpretation

- 6.1 In matters of doubt about interpretation of these procedures, the judgement of the Principal shall be final.

**These procedures will not be invalidated if the role title named in the procedure has changed or a nominee acts in the place of another named in the procedure.*

Appendix A

Guidance for students and academic staff on plagiarism categories and appropriate actions/penalties

Responsibilities: Markers or module organiser to raise the suspicion of plagiarism. Moderation Team to determine the category of plagiarism. Board of Examiners to ratify the category of plagiarism.

Category	Analysis of assessed work ^a	Student behaviour considerations ^a	Actions/Penalties available for each category
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several sentences of direct copying without acknowledging the source Several instances of inappropriate or unacknowledged paraphrasing Turnitin originality report indicates some copying but the similarity score is likely to be no more than 5%^c 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student is in their first year of Higher Education undertaken at any UK institution The student has not understood the importance of referencing or paraphrasing correctly The student's behaviour appears unintentional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No marking penalty Support for student development^b
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 20% of the text contains direct copying Up to 20% of the text contains inappropriate or unacknowledged paraphrasing Repeated offence of Category 1 plagiarism Turnitin originality report indicates significant copying and the similarity score may be from 5-20%^c There is a difficulty in marking as usual due to the volume of material from another source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student's behaviour appears intentional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark deduction or capped at the pass mark Support for student development^b
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large sections of direct copying without 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student's behaviour appears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark of zero awarded

	<p>the use of quotation marks and acknowledgement of the source, see General Regulations paragraph 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large sections of inappropriate paraphrasing • Submitting large sections of a previously submitted piece of work (at this university or any other) for assessment, see General Regulations paragraph 12.1 (h) • Turnitin originality report indicates high levels of copying and the similarity score may be 20% or more^c • Attempts to avoid detection • There is a complete inability to mark as usual due to the volume of material from another source 	<p>intentional, with evidence that selected words appear to have been changed to disguise copying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has intended to deceive the person marking the work • The student's behaviour would significantly compromise the integrity of the University's awards • The student may have been warned and/or reprimanded for previous attempts to deceive • Repeated offence of Category 2 plagiarism or a combination of Category 1 and 2 plagiarism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any resubmission is capped at the pass mark • Students on medical and healthcare programmes, which lead to professional registration, are required to disclose an Assessment Irregularity Offence when this information is requested by third parties (GMC/ NMC/HCPC/employer/Foundation School etc) • Support for student development^b
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three offences of plagiarism (from any category) on student file 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student has not responded to previous learning development opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to the Head of Student Conduct and Compliance under <i>Procedure for Considering Allegations of Assessment Irregularity</i> where expulsion may be considered (Investigating Officer to be appointed as outlined in Paragraph 2) • Students on medical and healthcare programmes, which lead to professional registration, are required to disclose an Assessment Irregularity Offence when this information is requested by third parties (GMC/ NMC/HCPC/employer/Foundation School etc) • Support for student development^b

^a The analysis and considerations should be used as a guide when determining the plagiarism category. All cases sit in a sliding scale of severity. There may be occasions when plagiarism would normally be considered at Category 1 or 2, but the extent of the deliberation and intention to deceive is such that it fits the criteria of a higher category

^b Tutorial or individual support and guidance given to help the student understand what is and is not acceptable; written advice should be provided to the student on where they can seek help (Academic skills or English language tutor)

^c Turnitin similarity scores are indicators only and similarity scores shall not necessarily equate to degrees of plagiarism. The copying may be present as a large uninterrupted block or it may be scattered as partial sentences/sentences throughout the document

Examples of plagiarism explained based on a review of the literature.

There is a strong requirement to be very clear and consistent in the distinction between plagiarism and poor academic practice so that students will be informed and educated accordingly. The following table provides examples based on good practice at other HEIs in the UK and on literature published by Plagiarismadvice.org (formerly the Plagiarism Advisory Service formed by JISC).

Example	
Copy and paste text from a source, no quotation marks, no citation	Plagiarism
Copy and paste text from a source, no quotation marks, citation included.	<p>The presence of a citation within the text may indicate that the student had not intended to plagiarise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat as Category 1 plagiarism in Year 1 of Higher Education. • Treat as Category 2/3 plagiarism subsequent years depending on the quantity of copied text (see table above for guidance).
Copy and paste text from a source, in quotations marks, citation included.	Not plagiarism. May be poor academic practice if excessive quantities of text are in quotations marks.
Paraphrasing: short phrases or sentences are taken from a source or a number of sources; they are pieced together with some original words, some words may be substituted for others, no quotation marks where they would have been appropriate, citation present.	<p>Plagiarism: this is inappropriate or poor paraphrasing and is very commonly encountered in student work. Often referred to as 'patchwork' writing. Some academics interpret this as poor academic practice, while others interpret it as plagiarism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat as Category 1 plagiarism in Year 1 of Higher Education. • Treat as category 2/3 plagiarism in Year 2 and above depending on the quantity of poorly paraphrased material included (see table above for guidance).
Paraphrasing: source is rewritten with substantial changes in the language and organisation, shared language only included, citation included.	Not plagiarism. Educational support required to help students achieve this level of competency at paraphrasing.