

London School of Theology (LST)

Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedure Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes

Group Responsible for policy and process review:	Academic Board
Executive Team Member Responsible:	Academic Secretary, Director of Academic Support
Date Last Approved:	February 2015
Date of this approval:	September 2022
Ongoing review:	Every 36 months
Review consultation:	Executive Team and Academic Board
Date of next review:	September 2025

Responsibilities and context

1. This document replaces all previous policies and procedures which respond to issues of academic integrity and misconduct.
2. The following documents have been considered in the drafting of this policy and procedure:
 - a. LST Learning Teaching and Assessment Policy.
 - b. LST Academic Regulations.
 - c. UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance for Assessment which requires higher education providers to operate effective processes for promoting academic integrity and identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice.¹
 - d. Middlesex University Policy and Procedures for Academic Integrity and Misconduct 2021-2022.
3. In the absence of the person holding a named post in this policy and procedure, the person deputising for them during the time of their absence shall substitute. A person holding a named post herein may delegate a nominee to act in their stead.
4. An Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel and any and all meetings relating to the implementation of this policy and procedure may take place in person, on Skype, on Zoom or through any other appropriate means of communication.

Rationale

5. LST (LST) is concerned to ensure that academic regulations are fully and fairly implemented, and will take action against any student who contravenes these regulations through negligence, foolishness or deliberate intent. As a confessional academic learning community founded on Christian principles, LST believes that integrity, honesty and transparency are essential principles to be seen in all that we do, including academic study. In simple terms, academic misconduct is cheating. It is where one student seeks to gain an unfair advantage by contravening the school's regulations. Furthermore, academic misconduct has the potential to both jeopardise the quality of teaching and learning and devalue the degrees and qualifications that students are awarded.

¹ https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/advice-and-guidance-assessment.pdf?sfvrsn=ca29c181_4, p11, [accessed 01.04.2022].

Definition of academic misconduct

6. Academic misconduct is best defined by way of examples; any of the following are regarded as misconduct:
- a. The presentation by a student as their own work of a body of material in any form (including but not limited to written, visual and oral work as well as musical compositions) which is wholly or partially the work of another, either in concept or expression, or which is a direct copy: this form of academic misconduct is referred to as plagiarism. Therefore, work presented for assessment must be a student's own work, or the work of a project group as requested by a tutor. Plagiarism is the representation of another person's published or unpublished work as the candidate's own by unacknowledged quotation. It is not an offence if material is acknowledged by the candidate as the work of another through the accurate use of quotation marks and the provision of detailed references and a full bibliography, although the marker will not expect work to rely heavily on direct quotations.
 - b. Copying the work of another student.
 - c. Arranging for another person, a group or people or an organisation such as an 'essay mill' to complete an assignment for submission by a candidate as their own work.
 - d. Transgression of examination room regulations as issued from time to time.
 - e. Being party to an arrangement intending to break or avoid the regulations.
 - f. Obtaining or seeking to obtain access to examination papers prior to the examination.
 - g. Being party to an arrangement whereby a person other than the candidate would fraudulently represent them at the assessment.
 - h. Failure to comply with the invigilators' instructions in an examination.
 - i. Behaviour of a manner likely to prejudice the chances of another candidate(s) in an assessment.
 - j. Offering a bribe or inducement to invigilators, academic or administrative staff, examiners or other persons connected with the assessments.
 - k. Including any material that is identical or substantially similar to the student's own material which has already been submitted for any other assessment within LST or elsewhere (self-plagiarism).
 - l. Presentation of data in research projects etc., based on work purported to have been carried out by a student that has been invented, altered, copied or obtained by unfair means.
 - m. Presentation of unauthorised group-work as the work of a single candidate.
 - n. False declarations in order to receive special consideration by Module / Assessment Boards, including extenuating circumstances applications, deferrals and requests for exemption from work (including false applications for accreditation of prior learning and experience).
 - o. The use of any form of unfair or dishonest practice in assessment not identified by the examples given above including an attempted infringement of LST's Assessment Regulations, any arrangement with others to do so or any incitement to others to do so.
 - p. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee including to obtain prior ethical approval for project / dissertation work which cannot be gained retrospectively.

Considerations

7. If a third party or anonymous whistle-blower reports that there may have been academic misconduct by a student then LST may decide to investigate the allegation. LST will not report any details about the investigation undertaken, or the outcome of the investigation, to the reporting third party. If a reporting third party insists on remaining anonymous, LST may not be able to reply on the anonymous information as evidence of academic misconduct, as under Data Protection legislation and other legal rights that protect individuals faced with allegations against them, the accused person will have a right to know what information others hold about them and how they obtained such information (as this is information relating to them and is therefore their personal data). If a reporting third party consents to their identity being disclosed to the student who has allegedly committed academic misconduct, LST may consider any precautionary measures that need to be put in place to protect the interests of the reporting person or anyone else involved. If LST cannot investigate an anonymous report, LST may use the information to better understand the issues impacting its community to understand trends and inform proactive preventative work.
8. A finding that academic misconduct has occurred is a judgement based on available evidence, the standard of proof being the balance of probability.

9. LST recognises that undergraduate students at Level 4 or below, and who are new to Higher Education, may need some time to learn how to acknowledge sources properly. Therefore, LST operates an 'academic writing induction period' during the first semester of Level 4; the purpose of this is to educate students with regard to appropriate academic practice and academic integrity. Therefore, in relation to the offence of plagiarism for a first semester module at first sitting only a marker, in consultation with the Programme Leader, may apply a mark deduction in cases where the plagiarism is minor and it is clear that inexperience may have been a factor.

Initial responses to evidence of possible academic misconduct

Suspicious arising during formal written examinations

10. Where an invigilator suspects a candidate of infringing examination room rules then the invigilator shall, if possible in the presence of another invigilator to act as witness to the action taken:
- Confiscate any unauthorised material in the possession of the candidate.
 - Endorse the candidate's script on the front cover with a note of the time when the alleged infringement is discovered. In the case of suspected collusion the invigilator should endorse the script of each candidate involved. Wherever possible the invigilator should require another invigilator to act as witness by countersigning the endorsement.
 - Issue a new examination script booklet to the candidate(s) in question, clearly instructing them to continue (not to restart) the examination.
 - Enter brief details of the incident on the invigilator's report.
 - At the end of the examination, inform the candidate(s) in question that a report of the incident will be submitted to the Programme Leader.
11. As soon as practicable after the examination, the invigilator(s) concerned shall report the incident to the Programme Leader in writing, stating the grounds for the suspicion of misconduct. If the Programme Leader agrees that there is a case to answer, the Programme Leader shall proceed as set out below.

Suspicious arising during assessment of submitted work

12. Where a marker, moderator, internal examiner or external examiner suspects a candidate of contravening the regulations in assessed coursework, they shall, where appropriate:
- Endorse the candidate's work on the front cover with a note detailing the nature or location of any evidence of collusion or plagiarised passages.
 - Highlight suspect passages or elements as appropriate within the body of the work.
 - Provide evidence of original sources of material used inappropriately within the assessment.
 - Report the allegation to the Programme Leader.
13. If the Programme Leader agrees that there is a case requiring formal response, then the Programme Leader shall proceed as set out below.

Formal responses to allegations of academic misconduct

14. There are two processes that can be used in response to an allegation of academic misconduct:
- Fast Track investigation and penalty.
 - Standard investigation panel.

Fast-track procedures for allegations of academic misconduct

15. Allegations of academic misconduct may be processed as follows if the Programme Leader judges that academic misconduct has occurred, and that it is a straightforward and uncontested case, meeting the criteria set out below. Compared with an investigation panel, this fast-track approach streamlines the system and reduces both bureaucracy and the time taken to process cases. For a fast-track response to occur, cases must align with all five of the following criteria:
- It is the first and only reported offence.
 - It occurs at level 4 of an undergraduate programme.
 - Less than 20 per cent of the total piece of work is plagiarised or unclearly referenced.
 - The assessment under consideration will not be counted towards a final qualification.
 - It comes within any of the following categories:
 - Plagiarism.
 - Apparent unauthorised collusion.
 - Inclusion of material for assessment which has previously been assessed (at LST or elsewhere).

16. The fast-track approach uses a standardised penalty. The Programme Leader will advise the marker to:
 - a. Reduce the mark awarded in view of the plagiaristic or over-derivative nature of the submission but not by a sufficient amount to alter the mark from a pass grade to a fail grade.
 - b. Request the Academic Secretary / Director of Academic Support (ASDAS) to issue a written warning to the student indicating the nature of the misconduct and the response of LST. A copy of this warning will be placed in the student's file.
17. Adoption of this fast-track procedure is not mandatory and either the Programme Leader, the ASDAS or the student concerned has the right for a standard investigation panel to be invoked, as described below. Furthermore, the student has a right to appeal against a fast-track decision, as set out below.

Standard investigation panel

18. If the Programme Leader decides that there is a case requiring formal response, and that the case does not fall within the fast-track approach described above, the marker and Programme Leader (or another member of faculty if the Programme Leader is also the marker) should arrange to meet the student to discuss the alleged case. All evidence should be presented at this meeting, at which the student may also provide mitigating reasons for the alleged misconduct. The student has the option to bring along a companion or witness to this meeting who may not be a legal professional or legal representative.
19. Following the meeting, the Programme Leader shall notify the ASDAS of the outcome of the meeting.
20. If the student accepts the allegation of academic misconduct, the ASDAS will convene an Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel (comprised of the Academic Dean, the ASDAS, the Programme Leader, and one further member of faculty). The Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel will consider the evidence, determine the outcome and decide on a penalty.
21. Either the Academic Dean or the ASDAS may chair the Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel. In exceptional circumstances either the ASDAS or the Academic Dean may nominate another member of the Panel as Chair if it becomes clear that neither of them is able to chair the meeting for any reason.
22. If the student denies the allegation of academic misconduct, and the explanation is not accepted by the Programme Leader and the marker, the ASDAS will:
 - a. Either convene an Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel (made up of the Academic Dean, the ASDAS, the Programme Leader, and one further member of faculty) which the student will be required to attend. The student may bring a companion or witness to this meeting who may not be a legal professional or legal representative.
 - b. Or invite the Programme Leader to convene an oral examination of the candidate.
23. After the evidence has been heard or the candidate has been orally examined, the Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel will consider its decision in private. If the allegation is upheld or the mitigating circumstances are regarded as insufficient to explain the matter, the Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel will decide on an appropriate penalty.

Penalties

24. The seriousness of the penalty will reflect the seriousness of the misconduct (e.g., the extent and type of misconduct, what level the offence occurs in, whether it is the first offence, and whether it includes documented and acceptable mitigating circumstances).
25. The penalty imposed, depending on the nature of the offence, may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. The resubmission of the originally submitted piece of work, or a different piece of work, with the mark capped at the appropriate level (pass mark of 40 or 16).
 - b. The resubmission of the originally submitted piece of work, or a different piece of work, with the mark capped at the appropriate level (pass mark of 40 or 16), and an additional piece of work decided by the panel and aiming to educate the student concerning academic misconduct.
 - c. A fail grade and the requirement to retake (and pay for) the module involved, including attendance and assessment criteria, with the mark capped at the appropriate level (pass mark of 40 or 16).

- d. A fail in up to 60 credit points, with the requirement to retake the whole term, semester or year, with attendance, and resit or resubmit the assessments when normally offered, possibly with a maximum mark of 40 or 16, at the student's own expense.
 - e. Expulsion from the School and Middlesex University.
26. The student is informed of the outcome by the ASDAS. The outcome is emailed to the student, a copy of which is placed on the student's file. The student's record and transcript are marked AMP against the mark for the relevant module or module element.

Right of appeal

27. The student has the right to appeal against the decision of the Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel to impose a penalty. Such an appeal may only be made by the student submitting a written appeal to the ASDAS within 5 working days of the date of the outcome being emailed to the student. Appeals will be considered by the Principal whose determination shall be final. There is no further right of appeal.

Reporting of academic misconduct

28. In all upheld cases of academic misconduct, the results of the process will be reported by the ASDAS to the Academic Board and to Middlesex University through the Educational Monitoring and Enhancement Report in which the student remains anonymous.

Unsustained allegation of academic misconduct

29. If an allegation of academic misconduct is not sustained, the student's work is marked as normal, and all record of the alleged infringement is removed from the student's records and the case is not reported to either the Academic Board or Middlesex University.

Middlesex University

30. LST is a Collaborative Partner of Middlesex University. Therefore, should a student be dissatisfied with the manner in which a case of academic integrity or misconduct has been handled then, in the case of academic matters that have a detrimental impact on academic matters, the student may be able to pursue a University Level Review. Middlesex University will only accept a University Level Review if the complaint relates to or impacts on academic matters and if the student's complaint demonstrates that:
- a. There has been a procedural irregularity in the investigation of a complaint regarding a matter related to their academic performance carried out by LST.
 - b. New information has come to light, which the student was unable to disclose previously, and which would have had a material impact upon the investigation previously undertaken.
 - c. The decision reached was unreasonable based on the information that had been available to Middlesex University when the case was considered.
31. To request a University Level Review, the student is required to submit the following to the Director of Student Affairs within 20 working days of receiving written confirmation of the final outcome of LST's investigation:
- a. The CPULR (Collaborative Partner University Review) Form (available on the Middlesex University website).
 - b. The final stage outcome of the investigation from LST.
 - c. Any other supporting documentation.
32. The receipt of the CPULR form will normally be acknowledged within five working days, and LST informed of the nature and substance of the complaint.
33. The CPULR form will be reviewed by the Director of Student Affairs or nominee. The University Level Review will consider whether (a) there has been a procedural irregularity in the investigation of the complaint by LST or (b) any new evidence has come to light which would have had a material impact on the investigation (see 74 above). Discussions may be held with the student and / or subject of the complaint, and with members of staff involved in LST's investigation process.
34. Where possible, reviews should normally take no more than 20 working days from the date that a student is notified that a designated Senior Manager is in place to handle the review. The Senior Manager undertaking the review will establish appropriate timescales based on the nature and complexity of the case. These timescales should be communicated, and the student kept informed of any changes.

35. The designated Senior Manager will inform the collaborative partner of the proposed outcome of their investigation and give the collaborative partner the opportunity to comment. The Completion of Procedure Letter will then be communicated to the student and the collaborative partner normally within 20 working days. Following this, any student who is dissatisfied with the decision may be able to apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education. Information and eligibility rules are available at www.oiahe.org.uk.
36. A student should understand that a University Level Review is not a reopening of the original complaint. Dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Student Academic Complaints Policy and Procedure is not alone a valid reason for requesting a review.