

## **London School of Theology (LST)**

### **Academic Integrity, Poor Academic Practice and Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes**

<b>Group Responsible for policy and process review:</b>	Academic Board
<b>Executive Team Member Responsible:</b>	Academic Secretary, Director of Academic Services
<b>Date Last Approved:</b>	September 2022
<b>Date of this approval:</b>	November 2023
<b>Ongoing review:</b>	Every 36 months
<b>Review consultation:</b>	Executive Team and Academic Board
<b>Date of next review:</b>	November 2026/7

#### **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 Assessment Regulations.
  - c. LST Extenuating Circumstance Policy
  - d. 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.
  - e. Middlesex University Policy and Procedures for Academic Integrity and Misconduct 2022-2023.
  - f. Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) good practice policy on Academic Disciplinary procedures.
3. An Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel and any meetings relating to the implementation of this policy and procedure may take place in person, on Teams/Zoom or through any other appropriate means of communication.

#### **Rationale**

4. The Student Academic Misconduct procedure sets out how the London School of Theology (LST) will investigate and penalise any conduct which is considered to breach LST's assessment regulations, and which is likely to give an unfair academic advantage to the candidate and/ or affect the security of assessments and/ or affect the integrity of the degrees awarded by LST. In addition, as LST is 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. Academic misconduct has the potential to both jeopardise the quality of teaching and learning and devalue the degrees and qualifications that students are awarded.

#### **Scope**

5. These procedures apply to all current and former taught students of LST, at both undergraduate and postgraduate taught level.
6. Where successful completion of a programme of study will lead to part or full professional accreditation, membership of a professional body, or the right to practise professionally, LST retains the rights to notify the relevant professional body and/or implement LST's Fitness to Practise Policy, in any proven Academic Misconduct.
7. 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. Where it is established that the student has not yet received teaching or guidance on Academic Misconduct and the use of referencing protocols, instances of plagiarism may be considered as **poor academic practice**. Therefore, for the purposes of this procedure, poor academic practice will not be considered academic misconduct as such and will be considered instead under Point 15-20 of the procedure below.

8. 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 rely 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.

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#### Definition of academic misconduct

9. Academic misconduct is best defined by way of examples; any of the following are regarded as misconduct:
  - a. Examination misconduct, including:
    - i. The use or possession of unauthorised books, notes, software, electronic devices, paper, or other materials in an examination other than those permitted. This includes material obtained from essay sites, also known as 'Essay Mills'.
    - ii. Obtaining or sharing an examination paper or assessment question ahead of its authorised release or obtaining or sharing another student's answer to an examination paper.
    - iii. Reading or writing before the start of the examination (with the exception of student information on the answer book front cover and examination envelope) or writing after the one-minute allowance has passed.
    - iv. The unauthorised removal of an examination script or stationery in any state from the examination room except by a person with the designated authority.
    - v. Any attempt to confer with, communicate or gain access to the script of any other candidate during the period of the examination.
    - vi. Removing oneself from the examination room during the period of an examination without permission from a member of staff.
    - vii. Causing a disturbance or disrupting the examination process
    - viii. Discussion or sharing of assessment content with other students or third parties.
    - ix. Copying or attempting to copy from another student's work.
  - b. Plagiarism: defined as the representation of other people's work or ideas as the student's own without appropriate referencing or acknowledgement. For instance:
    - i. Direct copying of text, musical material or illustrations, from a book, article, fellow student's essay or creative work, handout, thesis, web page, AI-generated content, or other source without proper acknowledgement.
    - ii. Claiming individual ideas derived from a book, article, musical composition etc. as one's own, and incorporating them into one's work without properly acknowledging the source of those ideas. This includes, among many other things, insufficiently

paraphrasing a source, or altering the material taken from the source so it appears to be one's own work or mirroring the structure of the argument or creative work of another writer without correct attribution.

- iii. Overly depending on the work of others by constructing a significant part of an assessment by extracting large sections of text from another source without appropriate referencing or acknowledgement.
  - iv. Self-plagiarism: the re-submission or re-use of the student's own work in another assignment whether this was submitted at the London School of Theology or any other academic institution. This is not intended to prevent a student from developing an academic idea over the course of their studies, for example stating an argument in an essay for a particular module and then developing this argument in a dissertation (correctly citing the previous work), but to prevent the counting of credit twice for the same piece of work, or sections of work.
  - v. With regard to music composition, copying of another composer's material may be permitted when the assignment involves writing an arrangement of existing material, or where quoting a section of another composer's work is a deliberate creative strategy appropriate for the assignment. Quoted material should be clearly acknowledged, either in the Composer reference at the start or by means of an explanatory footnote. If in doubt students should seek advice from the tutor before submitting their work.
- c. Collusion: defined as the unauthorised collaboration by two or more students, whether in person or via electronic device, on a piece of work which is then submitted as part of an assessment, without acknowledgement of the other's contribution. This does not prohibit authorised collaboration, where an assessment relies on group work (for example, planning and delivering chapel services in teams, or performing as part of a music ensemble).
- d. Any attempt to gain access to the assessed coursework of any other candidate with or without the knowledge of the other candidate, unless authorisation to do so, has been given by the module leader.
- e. Falsification: defined as the fraudulent creation, alteration or misrepresentation of data, or any other information. This includes falsification of word count and inclusion of fabricated references.
- f. Contract Cheating: defined as commissioning a piece of assessment to be carried out by a third party or knowingly using a commissioned piece of assessment. This can include arranging for another student or individual to complete an assessment, paying a company to provide an assignment or using artificial intelligence or chatbots to complete all or part of an assessment. Students should be aware that it is a criminal offence to advertise or provide Contract Cheating services.
- g. Being party to an arrangement whereby a person other than the candidate would fraudulently represent them at the assessment.
- h. Falsification of Extenuating Circumstances or false declarations in order to receive special consideration by Module / Assessment Boards, including extenuating circumstances applications, extensions and requests for exemption from work (including false applications for accreditation of prior learning and experience).
- i. Any conduct that is likely to affect the security of assessments.
- j. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee including the need to obtain prior ethical approval for project / dissertation work. Normally, approval cannot be gained retrospectively.
- k. Offering a bribe or inducement to invigilators, academic or administrative staff, examiners or other persons connected with the assessments.

- l. Any other conduct that would give an unfair academic advantage to a student.
- m. 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 and any arrangement with others to do so.

### ***Initial responses to evidence of possible academic misconduct***

#### **Suspensions 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):
  - a. Confiscate any unauthorised material in the possession of the candidate.
  - b. 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.
  - c. Issue a new examination script booklet to the candidate(s) in question, clearly instructing them to continue (not to restart) the examination.
  - d. Enter brief details of the incident in the invigilator's report.
  - e. 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 in 13-26.

#### **Suspensions 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 follow the steps outlined in 13 – 26.

### ***Formal responses to allegations of Poor Academic Practice and/or Academic misconduct.***

13. Concerns regarding academic integrity, poor academic practice and/or academic misconduct will fall into one of the three categories outlined and should be dealt with in the following way:
  - **Minor errors:** Please see 14.
  - **Poor Academic Practice.** Please see 15-20.
  - **Academic Misconduct:** These will be dealt with EITHER by a  
Fast Track investigation: Please see 21-23.  
OR Standard investigation panel: please see 24-26.

A finding that poor academic practice/academic misconduct has occurred is an academic judgement based on available evidence, the standard of proof being the balance of probability.

14. **Minor errors**
  - a. For **limited and minor mistakes or typographical errors**, these should be **dealt with via the marking spine**. Comments should be constructive and proportionate, paying attention to the level of study and any disclosed disability/learning difference.  
Examples include:

- a. missing the occasional quotation mark.
  - b. poor paraphrasing (limited).
  - c. bibliographic errors (such as incorrect formatting and punctuation).
  - d. non-compliance with minor aspects of presentation guidelines in the bibliography or reference list.
  - e. inconsistent or incorrect referencing style.
15. **Poor academic practice** may arise from a lack of understanding of how to produce a piece of academic work. **A student who is new to studying in Higher Education (i.e. in level 4 or below of study)** may be unfamiliar with how to present work and in doing so, may make mistakes which need to be addressed. The errors are likely to have been made through carelessness or inexperience. It should be evident that the student has at least **attempted to attribute/reference the source**, even if done incorrectly or with insufficient care.
- Examples include:
- a. multiple instances of missing quotation marks, inadequate referencing or citation (including footnotes), poor paraphrasing.
  - b. an over-reliance on external sources or for being overly derivative.
  - c. limited examples of missing attribution/copied material (e.g. words, ideas, diagrams, musical notation or composition).
  - d. limited inappropriate levels of collaboration with another student.
  - e. errors or missing information in the bibliography.
- We acknowledge that students may need time to adjust and understand the expectations and requirements of higher education study.
16. When an allegation of poor academic practice is made against a student, this is processed by the marker with advice from the Programme Leader when necessary.
17. The marker must complete part 1 of the [Reporting Academic Misconduct](#) form and follow the required steps on the form. If the Programme Leader agrees there is a case for the student, they must complete part 2 of the form.
18. Future concerns regarding poor academic practice (i.e. more than **2 incidences** in a student's enrolment on a programme) will be considered as suspected academic misconduct, and the prior written warning(s) that will be sent to the student (see Penalties section below) in light of these prior findings of poor academic practice, will be taken into consideration by the Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel.
19. A first or second offence will not automatically be deemed poor academic practice - it might be serious enough to be referred straight to the Academic Misconduct process.
20. Poor academic practice will not be recorded on a student's transcript, but an internal record will be made.

#### **Academic Misconduct - Fast-track procedure.**

21. An allegation of academic misconduct may be processed as follows if the marker and Programme Leader judges that it is a straightforward and uncontested case and meets the criteria set out below. Compared with an investigation panel, the 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 three of the following criteria:
- a. It is the first and only reported offence of academic misconduct (can include more than 1 submission if in the same assessment period)
  - b. It occurs at level 4 of an undergraduate programme (level 5/6/7 may be considered if a student has APL at level 4 or above and/or been out of education for a period of time).
  - c. Less than 20 per cent of the total piece of work is unclearly referenced or plagiarised.

22. The marker must complete part 1 of the [Reporting Academic Misconduct](#) form and follow the required steps on the form. If the Programme Leader agrees there is a case for the student, they must complete part 2 of the form.
23. Adoption of the 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 in 24. Furthermore, the student has a right to appeal against a fast-track decision, as set out in 29.

#### **Academic Misconduct - Standard investigation Meeting**

24. An allegation of academic misconduct requiring a Standard investigation meeting may be processed as follows if the Marker and Programme Leader are in agreement.
  - a. The marker must complete part 1 of the [Reporting Academic Misconduct](#) form and follow the required steps on the form.
  - b. The Programme Leader completes part 2 of the form and decides if there is a case requiring formal response, and that the case does not fall within the fast-track criteria described above.
  - c. The marker should arrange to meet the student to discuss the alleged case with the Programme Leader (or another member of faculty if the Programme Leader is also the marker).
  - d. The student should be given at least 2-3 working days' notice of the meeting and has the option to bring along a companion or witness to this meeting who must not be acting as a legal professional or legal representative.
  - e. Written details of the allegation (via email) should be provided by the marker to the student prior to the meeting.
  - f. The student must make every effort to attend the meeting but if unable to attend for a good reason (with evidence) an alternative date for the meeting will be considered. If a reply from the student is not received, the case will automatically be referred to the Academic Misconduct Panel.
  - g. During the meeting, the Programme Leader will explain the AM procedure and nature of the allegation. The marker will confirm what the allegation is, which piece of assessment within which module and explain the evidence that is present.
  - h. If the student provides evidence of extenuating circumstances that directly led to academic misconduct being committed, such information does not impact on the decision as to whether or not the academic misconduct has occurred. Extenuating circumstances (EC) claims should be dealt with under the normal extenuating circumstance process. However, the expectation is that students will engage with the EC process prior to the assessment rather than submitting an assessment which results in a breach of the academic misconduct regulations.
25. Following the meeting, the Programme Leader notifies the ASDAS of the outcome of the meeting:

If the student:

- a. accepts the allegation of academic misconduct, the case will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel (comprised of the Academic Dean and/or the ASDAS, the Programme Leader, and one further member of faculty, who shall not be the marker). The Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel will consider the evidence, determine the outcome based on the balance of probabilities and decide on a penalty using the guidance in Appendix A.
- b. denies the allegation of academic misconduct, and the explanation is not accepted by the Programme Leader and the marker:
  - i. The case will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel (comprised 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 should be given at least 2-3 working days' notice of the Panel meeting and may bring a companion or witness to this meeting who must not be acting as a legal professional or legal representative.

- ii. The Programme Leader may convene an oral examination of the candidate as part of the Panel meeting in cases where the student continues to deny the allegation.

After the evidence has been heard, the student will be permitted to make a brief final statement to the Panel if they wish to do so. They will then be asked to leave the Panel meeting. The Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel will consider its decision in private. Where the student has denied the allegation and the Panel decides that the allegation is Not Upheld, no penalty will be imposed, the case is not reported to Academic Board or Middlesex University, and the case against the student will be dropped. In cases where the student has accepted the allegation, and in cases where a student has denied the allegation, but the Panel concludes that it is Upheld, the Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel will decide on an appropriate penalty using the guidance in Appendix A.

26. 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.

#### **Penalties**

27. Penalties for proven poor academic practice (written notice and/or penalty) and for academic misconduct will be given in accordance with the Academic Misconduct Penalties in Appendix A which is a points-based penalty system used in Higher Education institutions.

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 at, whether it is the first offence etc.).

28. The student is informed of the outcome of the Panel meeting, with any penalty to be levied, by the ASDAS. The outcome is emailed to the student, a record placed on the Academic Integrity Register and (if applicable) the Student Information System updated. The student's record and transcript are marked AMP against the mark for the relevant module or module element.

#### **Right of appeal**

29. The student has the right to appeal (if there are legitimate grounds) against the decision of the Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel/poor academic practice 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 for poor academic practice will be considered by the Academic Misconduct Investigation Panel. Appeals for Academic Misconduct will be considered by the Principal whose determination shall be final. There is no further right of appeal.

#### **Reporting of academic misconduct**

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

#### **Middlesex University**

31. 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 the matter should be dealt with in accordance with LST's Student Academic Complaint Policy and Procedure.
32. Where a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint submitted in accordance with LST's Student Academic Complaint Policy and Procedure 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.
33. 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:
- The CPULR (Collaborative Partner University Review) Form (available on the Middlesex University website).
  - The final stage outcome of the investigation from LST.
  - Any other supporting documentation.
34. 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.
35. 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. Discussions may be held with the student and / or subject of the complaint, and with members of staff involved in LST's investigation process.
36. If dissatisfied with the outcome of the referral of their case to Middlesex University, the student may lodge a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education, having first informed the Academic Dean (as the School's OIA Link) and Middlesex University of their intention to do so. The OIA itself requires that any student complaint made to them must be lodged within **12 months** of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter they receive from their relevant Higher Education Provider, although they advise that it is usually better to complain as soon as possible after the conclusion of internal processes at that provider. This is because the remedies the OIA might recommend could be limited if a student waits a year before complaining.