

**Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedure
for Postgraduate Research Students**

Group Responsible for policy and process review:	Academic Board
Executive Team Member Responsible:	Academic Dean
Date Last Approved:	November 2024
Ongoing review:	Every 36 months
Review consultation:	Research Degrees Committee and Academic Board
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1. Purpose and Context

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear framework for upholding academic integrity and addressing misconduct among research students at London School of Theology [hereafter 'The School']. This policy aims to promote an environment of ethical research practices, encourage responsible conduct, and ensure that all research activities are conducted in accordance with the highest standards of integrity.

Academic Misconduct is also addressed in the School's Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedure: Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes. While many of the core definitions and principles enshrined in that document also apply to research programmes, this Policy addresses issues of Academic Misconduct that pertain more specifically and distinctively to postgraduate research students.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all research students enrolled at the School—specifically those pursuing MTh, MPhil and PhD degrees.

3. Principles of Academic Integrity

All research students at the School are expected to adhere to the following principles of academic integrity:

- **Honesty:** All research activities must be conducted honestly, and all findings must be reported accurately.
- **Trust:** All research students should foster a culture of trust in their academic community by being transparent in their research processes.
- **Fairness:** All research students should be treated fairly and should strive to treat others equitably in their research practices.
- **Respect:** All research students should respect the intellectual property rights of others and acknowledge the contributions of collaborators and previous researchers.
- **Responsibility:** All research students are responsible for their own work and for the ethical treatment of research subjects, data, and the environment.

4. Definition of Academic Misconduct

Academic Misconduct in the research degree context refers to any action that undermines the integrity of the research process. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Plagiarism:** Submitting work that is not one's own, including failing properly to attribute sources, ideas, or data. Misuse of AI, essay mills or third parties to generate sections of a thesis presented at the student's own work are included in this definition.
- **Fabrication:** Making up data or results and presenting them as legitimate research findings.
- **Falsification:** Manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data to misrepresent research outcomes.

- **Duplicate Publication:** Publishing the same research findings in multiple sources or outlets without proper acknowledgment of prior publication of that research elsewhere.
- **Misuse of Resources:** Misappropriating, misusing, or failing to account for research funds, facilities, or materials.
- **Unethical Treatment of Research Subjects:** Failing to adhere to established ethical precepts and requirements in the treatment of human subjects—specifically as defined by the School’s Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures.

5. Responsibilities of Research Students

All research students bear the following key responsibilities:

- To familiarize themselves thoroughly with this Policy and Procedure, and with related policies, procedures, guidelines and pro formas.
- To conduct their research in accordance with ethical standards and institutional guidelines defined by the School.
- To seek guidance from their Supervisor/s, from their Director of Studies, from the Director of Research, from the Registry or from other officers and/or departments of the School, as appropriate, if they are uncertain about any aspect of this Policy and Procedure, and about any of the ethical requirements and protocols set out or referenced here.
- To report any suspected academic misconduct committed by others within the School community, as set out in Section 6 below.

6. Reporting Misconduct

In most circumstances, it is expected that minor early-stage or lower-level issues relating to a student’s divergence from best practice in research will be addressed by their Supervisor/s and/or Director of Studies in the normal course of the supervision and annual review process. However, recurrent and/or more serious breaches as listed in Section 4 above should be reported in writing by the Supervisor/s/Director of Studies, or by another party, with supporting evidence, to the Director of Research or, in the Director of Research’s absence or ineligibility, to the Academic Dean or Academic Secretary and Director of Academic Services (ASDAS), who will act as Investigating Manager.

Anonymous reports will not normally be considered, but they may be processed if the supporting evidence is deemed sufficiently compelling by the Investigating Manager. The Director of Research or Academic Dean will not be eligible to act as Investigating Manager for a thesis to which they themselves have been assigned as Supervisor or Internal Examiner: in such cases, the ASDAS, or a suitable other senior member of faculty or staff delegated by the ASDAS, will act as Investigating Manager.

Where Academic Misconduct is suspected or discovered in the formal examination process by either the Internal or External Examiner or both during their reading and evaluation of the thesis before a Viva Voce exam, or at the Viva itself, the procedure set out in Section 9 below will apply.

7. Investigative Procedure

Upon receiving a report of suspected misconduct, the Investigating Manager will pursue the following process in sequence:

- a. **Initial Assessment.** As Investigating Manager, the Director of Research (or if he/she is unavailable or ineligible the Academic Dean or ASDAS) will conduct an initial assessment to determine if there is sufficient evidence to warrant a Formal Investigation. If it is deemed that there is not, the Investigating Manager may either determine that the student has no case to answer, and is thus exonerated, or may recommend that the Supervisor/s work with the student to eliminate minor errors/inconsistencies of presentation, citation and/or referencing. In either case, the Investigating

Manager should inform the student and supervisor of this in writing. Otherwise, the case will be taken forward to a Formal Investigation.

- b. **Formal Investigation.** If deemed to be warranted by the Initial Assessment, a Formal Investigation will be undertaken by the Director of Research (or if he/she is unavailable or ineligible the Academic Dean or ASDAS). This will involve a review of evidence, interviews with relevant parties including the student, Supervisors, Director of Studies, and others as appropriate. On concluding the Formal Investigation, the Director of Research (or if he/she is unavailable or ineligible, the Academic Dean or ASDAS) will bring a written report of their Formal Investigation to the Academic Misconduct Panel, making any recommendations as deemed appropriate for penalties to be applied.
- c. **Consideration and Determination by Academic Misconduct Panel.** On considering the Report and Recommendations of the Formal Investigation, the Academic Misconduct Panel will determine the Outcome of the Investigation in accordance with one of the following categories:
- **No case to answer** – no penalty imposed. Student free to continue with research without warning or sanction.
 - **Poor Research Practice: Verbal Warning.** Informal oral advice to be given by the Chair or a delegated member of the Academic Misconduct Panel to the student to eliminate poor academic practice, where Poor Academic Practice is taken to include one or more of the following:
 - Essentially thorough but discernibly inconsistent or incomplete referencing in footnotes or bibliography.
 - Occasional failure to close quotation marks on passages cited directly from other sources.
 - Occasional ambiguity in certain passages between paraphrasing and direct quotation.
 - Some evidence of proof reading by another party edging into over-editing/drafting of sections of the thesis text.
 - **Academic Misconduct: Written Warning.** Formal advice to a student that they have seriously breached this Policy, and that any further such breach will result in sanctions being applied as per Section 8 below. Serious breaches meriting such a Formal Written Warning may include:
 - Serially inconsistent or incomplete referencing in footnotes or bibliography.
 - Repeated failure to close quotation marks on passages cited directly from other sources.
 - Repeated ambiguity in certain passages between paraphrasing and direct quotation.
 - Substantive evidence of proof reading by another party edging into over-editing/drafting of sections of the thesis text.
 - **More Serious Academic Misconduct:** Sanctions to be applied as in Section 8 below.

8. Sanctions

If a finding of more serious Academic Misconduct is substantiated by the Formal Investigation and confirmed by Academic Misconduct Panel, one of the following formal sanctions may be applied, depending on the severity of the misconduct proved:

- Revision of a relevant section or sections of the thesis to eliminate breaches of this Policy.
- Suspension of registration, including of Library access, for a period of up to one year, with a requirement to address the relevant breaches of this Policy.
- Where a student has already been upgraded from an MPhil to a PhD, demotion of the thesis from PhD to MPhil, such that MPhil becomes the designated exit award for the student concerned.
- Expulsion from the programme.

9. Discovery of Academic Misconduct in the formal Examination process

If Academic Misconduct is only discovered by an Internal or External Examiner during the formal process of reading the thesis for examination, or at the Viva Voce examination itself, they may deem it sufficient to warrant one of the following designated examination Outcomes:

- The candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis to address lower-level breaches of this Policy.
- The candidate be permitted to re-submit for the degree and be re-examined, with or without an oral examination, in order to enable the elimination of breaches of this Policy.
- The candidate be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be re-examined, as a result of serious breaches of this Policy.
- The candidate be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners, to eliminate breaches of this Policy.

10. Retrospective Discovery of Academic Misconduct once a Research Degree has been Awarded

If Academic Misconduct is reported/alleged after a Research Degree has been awarded for a thesis, the Academic Misconduct Panel will consider the evidence for such Misconduct and will determine appropriate action to be taken, which may include one or more of the following:

- No case to answer, with confirmation of this to those who have reported/alleged Academic Misconduct.
- Formally informing the holder of the relevant research degree that their thesis has been found retrospectively to have breached the requirements of this Policy, and advising as appropriate that the relevant breach or breaches be addressed in any future publication/s based on relevant sections of the thesis, or on the thesis as a whole.
- Appending a Note to the thesis, as lodged in the School's physical and digital Libraries, that it was found retrospectively to have been in breach of this Policy, and detailing the relevant breach or breaches in question.
- Reporting the relevant breach or breaches to Middlesex University.
- Informing the publisher/s of work based on the thesis that the thesis has been found retrospectively by the School to have breached this policy.

11. Appeal Process

Research students have the right to appeal any decision made by the Academic Misconduct Panel under this Policy and Procedure to the Principal, or, if the Principal is unavailable or ineligible to hear the Appeal due to having been involved in the supervision or examination of the thesis concerned, a delegated substitute from the senior faculty or staff teams. Appeals must be submitted in writing, with any relevant supporting counterevidence, within 10 working days of receiving the Outcome from the Academic Misconduct Panel. An Appeal hearing will then be arranged with the student within 30 working days of the Appeal being lodged.

Where an Appeal is made against an Outcome of the formal examination of the thesis based on a finding of Academic Misconduct by the examiners, the student will have recourse to the [Appeals procedures of Middlesex University](#) (clause 70) with regard to the outcome of research degree examinations.

If Academic Misconduct is found to have occurred retrospectively following the award of a Research degree as defined in Section 11 above, the recipient of the degree will not have recourse to the internal Appeals procedure defined above, as they will no longer be a student. However, they may, if they wish, pursue the matter through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA): <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

10. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Feedback from research students and faculty will be solicited during the review process.