Queen Mary Academic Misconduct penalty guidance

Background
Academic misconduct is generally defined in the Academic Misconduct Policy as cheating (or attempted cheating) that occurs in relation to an assessment. Such behaviour runs contrary to Queen Mary’s core values, including its commitment to act with integrity and the highest ethical standards.

Academic misconduct is extremely serious and any student who engages in it puts their academic career at Queen Mary in jeopardy. Students must do everything they can to ensure they act in accordance with the standards of higher education in the UK.

This document contains guidance for cases of academic misconduct considered at the institutional level – this process is managed by the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office, which can be contacted by emailing appeals@qmul.ac.uk.

Academic misconduct, including the academic misconduct process at Queen Mary, is governed by the Academic Misconduct Policy and the Academic Regulations. Please read this guidance together with those documents.

Penalties
Any decision on the penalty to be applied in a case of proven academic misconduct is made using the judgement of the Academic Misconduct Panel, or that of the Chair or Deputy Chair where they act on behalf of the Panel.

In all cases the decision of the Panel, Chair, or Deputy Chair is final. The Panel, Chair, or Deputy Chair has the discretion to apply the entire range of penalties available to them and will provide the student with the reason(s) for the penalty to be applied. A full Panel has more penalties available to it than a Chair or Deputy Chair.

The following are key issues that will be considered by a Panel, Chair, or Deputy Chair when determining an appropriate penalty:

- **The severity of the offence** – for example in plagiarism cases the volume of plagiarism detected - this is not limited to the amount of text, or similarity index on Turnitin but may also include the structure of a piece of work, or the unattributed ideas of others.
- **The value of the assessment** – did the misconduct take place in a final-year project/dissertation? How many credits is the module worth and what is the weighting of the assessment within the module?
- **Intent to deceive** – the use of a paid ghost-writing service, for example, shows no attempt to produce work, is fraudulent, and will be treated with the utmost seriousness.
- **Level of study** – first-year undergraduate students may be treated more leniently than subsequent-year undergraduate and postgraduate students who can reasonably be expected to be aware of the conventions of referencing and good academic practice.
- **Any relevant accompanying behaviour** – actions such as accusing an innocent student of complicity in collusion cases or jeopardising another student’s academic standing, for example.
- **The effect of the penalty** – does a particular penalty mean that a student cannot progress or achieve their intended award?
- **No advantage** – all decisions will consider whether or not a student who committed academic misconduct will be advantaged over a student who failed an assessment or module honestly, and attempt to ensure this is not the case.
- **Extenuating Circumstances** – any ECs supported by evidence will be considered when a penalty is decided. However, when a student submits any assessment they are declaring themselves fit to sit and this will also be taken into account. ECs will never be used to excuse misconduct.

**Penalties that may be applied from the Academic Misconduct Policy**

If it is determined that academic misconduct has been committed, the Chair or the Panel will impose one or more of the following penalties (see the [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) for more details).

i. a formal reprimand.

ii. capping to the minimum pass mark for the assessment in which misconduct occurred.

iii. failure (a mark of zero) in the element of assessment in which misconduct occurred, with a resubmission of the element permitted with the same attempt at the module. This will not count as an additional attempt, but the mark for the resubmitted element will be capped to the minimum pass mark.

iv. capping to the minimum pass mark for the module in which misconduct occurred.

v. failure (a mark of zero) in the module of which the assessment forms a part, with the maximum mark on any resit or retake limited to the minimum pass mark.

vi. failure (a mark of zero) in the module of which the assessment forms a part, with no permission to resit or retake the module.

vii. capping to the minimum pass mark for all modules taken (and yet to be taken) in the current academic year. Any module marks below the minimum pass mark will stand.

The following penalties can only be applied after a full meeting of the Academic Misconduct Panel:

viii. a recommendation to the Principal that the student be suspended from the programme for a period of up to one academic year, and/or marks of zero in all modules taken during the academic year in which the misconduct occurred.

ix. a recommendation to the Principal that the student be expelled from Queen Mary, and/or marks of zero in all modules taken during the academic year in which the misconduct occurred.

As noted above (see penalties viii. and ix.), in very serious cases the [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) permits a full Academic Misconduct Panel to request that a student is suspended or expelled from Queen Mary. The ultimate decision on these penalties rests with the Principal.

**It is crucial to note that each case is considered on its individual merits** – the specific circumstances of an individual case will have an impact on the chosen penalty if the Panel, Chair, or Deputy Chair is satisfied that academic misconduct has occurred.

Below is a table detailing the penalties a student might *normally* expect if they have been found to have committed academic misconduct.

---

**Academic misconduct penalty guidance**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of misconduct</th>
<th>Example misconduct*</th>
<th>Commonly applied penalty**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Plagiarism/collusion                   | • Small amount of plagiarism  
• First finding of misconduct by a first-year UG student | Penalty iii.              |
|                                        | • First finding of misconduct by a second or third-year UG student  
• First finding of misconduct by a PG student | Penalty iii. or v.        |
| Misconduct in invigilated examinations | • Mobile phone or unauthorised electronic device on person  
• Unauthorised material on person  
• Having writing on body  
• Communicating with another student  
• Failing to follow the instructions of an invigilator  
• Copying the work of another student | Penalty v.                  |
| Ghost-writing                          | • Contract cheating  
• The use of websites like Chegg, Bartleby, Course Hero where students actively request their work is completed by a third-party | Dependent on the facts of the case. Generally misconduct of this kind will incur severe penalties that reflect the nature of the case. Students should expect penalty vi. as a minimum, and may receive multiple penalties. |
| Other types of misconduct              | • Fraudulent reporting of source material  
• Falsification of data  
• Impersonation of another student | Dependent on the facts of the case. Generally misconduct of this kind will incur severe penalties that reflect the nature of the case. Students should expect penalty vi. as a minimum, and may receive multiple penalties. |
| A second or subsequent offence of any kind | See above examples                                                                 | Relative to previous penalty |

* These examples of academic misconduct are not exhaustive. Please consult the Academic Misconduct Policy for further information.

** The penalty or penalties applied to any specific case is entirely at the discretion of the decision maker (Panel, Chair, or Deputy Chair), and every case of academic misconduct is considered on its individual merits. Any case may receive a lower or higher penalty than those outlined above and any difference between this guidance and an actual outcome does not constitute valid grounds for appeal.
Academic misconduct procedure for allegations reported to the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office (ACCO)

Potential academic misconduct identified by School/Institute and referred to the ACCO

Student is notified of the allegation by the ACCO and presented with the evidence – all students are asked to accept or deny the allegation

If a student:
- accepts or does not deny the allegation
- does not respond to the allegation
- denies the allegation but consents to a decision by the Chair or a Deputy Chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel

If a student denies the allegation and wishes for the matter to be considered by a meeting of a full Academic Misconduct Panel

Chair/Deputy Chair considers case, determines whether misconduct has occurred, and applies appropriate penalty

Academic Misconduct Panel considers case, determines whether misconduct has occurred, and applies appropriate penalty

The student is informed of outcome in writing, and the student record is amended to reflect any penalty applied