

8.5 Academic Impropriety Policy

Title:	Academic Impropriety Policy
Responsibility:	Assessment and Regulations Manager
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8.5.1 Promoting Academic Integrity

DBS promotes academic integrity and is proactive in encouraging correct academic writing and research skills. All learners are advised of the expectations in relation to academic work submitted for assessment and are provided with access to services to support the development of appropriate academic skills. In addition, DBS uses plagiarism detection software (see **appendix 8.7** for full details of the plagiarism detection software policy).

Learners are advised that DBS takes cases of academic impropriety very seriously and will apply penalties up to and including expulsion from the College with no right to return or entitlement to a refund.

DBS reserves the right to protect its reputation as an academic institution and will defend any legal challenge to its implementation of this policy and the outcomes of deliberations relating to academic impropriety.

Examiners are reminded that poor academic conduct or academic impoverishment is not to be confused with impropriety. Instances of academic impoverishment should be addressed through marking accordingly and providing the appropriate feedback to assist academic development. Cases of suspected academic impropriety i.e. the intention to secure an unfair advantage through dishonest academic practice in the assessment process, should be addressed through the Academic Impropriety procedure.

DBS encourages communities of learning, the creation of learning partnerships, and authorised collaboration in assessment. However, all assessment tasks are to be entirely the work of the individual submitting it unless stated otherwise. Any assessments found to contain work the same as, or similar to, that of another learner, past or present, will also be considered academic impropriety and the appropriate procedure will be applied and penalties determined as appropriate. In order to deter learners from considering academic impropriety as a low risk option in cases where they feel failure is likely, in considering the penalty to be imposed the Committee should normally ensure that any penalty is more significant than having made an honest attempt at assessment and failed.

DBS reserves the right to carry out a “*viva voce*” examination for Masters Dissertations or any assessment of a significant ECTS weighting. A *viva voce* is an opportunity for you to orally defend the

assessment piece that you have submitted. DBS may institute a viva examination in the case where clarification is required regarding some element or elements of the written piece of work.

The scope of a viva examination can include:

- confirming to the satisfaction of the panel that your submission is your own original work,
- verify the authenticity of the research,
- establish that you are aware of the wider research field of your chosen topic,
- demonstrate that you understand in detail the content of your written submission.

In the case where a panel deems that a student cannot sufficiently recount their work, the panel has the authority to either pass or fail the student based upon the strength of their oral defence.

In cases where a large disparity between a strong written submission and a poor oral defence occurs, the panel may refer the case to the disciplinary committee with an accompanying report; the report will also be provided to the student in advance of the disciplinary committee hearing. The disciplinary committee will impose a penalty based on the severity of the case as detailed in the report provided by the panel. The disciplinary committee will not revisit the case itself, the remit of the committee is to impose a minor or major penalty and provide that outcome to the student in a timely fashion.

8.5.1.1 Definitions

Cheating:

Examples of cheating include but are not restricted to:

1. Any form of communication with or copying from any other source during an examination/assessment
2. Use of a third party for the completion or partial completion of an assessment e.g. friend, family member or essay writing service
3. Introducing any form of written or other material into an examination (including that stored electronically) other than that specified on an examination paper
4. Use of mobile phone during an assessment or examination
5. Forgery, alteration or misuse of College documents, records or identity cards
6. Submission of false claims of prior qualification, research or experience in order to gain credit for prior learning.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is defined as: the presentation of work, written or otherwise, of any other person, including another learner, or institution, as the candidate's own. Plagiarism includes but is not restricted to:

1. Verbatim copying of another's work without clear identification and acknowledgement
2. Close paraphrasing of another's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation without clear identification and acknowledgement
3. Unidentified /unacknowledged presentation of another's concept as one's own.

Collusion:

Collusion is defined as: the conscious collaboration, without official approval, between two or more learners in the preparation and production of work which is ultimately submitted by each in an identical or substantially similar form and/or is represented by each to be the product of his or her individual efforts. Collusion also occurs where there is unauthorised co-operation between a learner and another person in the preparation and production of work, which is presented as the learner's own.

8.5.2 Implementation of the Academic Impropriety Policy

DBS operates on the basis of fairness and transparency, promotes academic integrity and seeks to ensure the validity and reliability of the assessment process. As a result, the Academic Impropriety

policy will be applied in a consistent manner and all instances of suspected academic impropriety will be managed through this procedure.

DBS will not condone or facilitate academic conduct that seeks to intentionally compromise the reputation of DBS as an academic institution and the standards of the programmes it offers.

All learners will be notified of the action to be taken in any instance of academic impropriety being suspected and the potential penalties that may be applied.

The academic impropriety policy applies to all learners on all DBS programmes regardless of location, mode of study or target award. Exceptions apply where an alternative policy has been agreed as part of a formal collaboration.

The Assessment and Regulations Manager is responsible for the implementation of this policy in respect of all cases brought to his / her attention and is also responsible for ensuring all lecturing staff are aware of the policy, of their obligations within it and how to act in cases of suspected academic impropriety.

The Assessment and Regulations Manager is responsible for determining whether an identified case of suspected impropriety warrants further investigation.

Where a suspicion of impropriety is identified the policy must be applied in a timely manner to ensure the interests of the learner concerned and consideration of examination board requirements. A learner must be of any suspicion and of any proceedings where a matter is being investigated. Notification should be in writing and should normally be by email. The learner should be notified of their rights and provided with a link to or copy of the policy and procedure along with any source material identified in cases of suspected plagiarism.

Each learner has a right to attend a formal deliberating committee in respect of a case brought against them. Should they choose not to attend or participate the committee is authorised to proceed regardless. DBS strongly encourages the attendance of learners at applicable meetings of the AI committee. Learners are permitted to ask a member of student services or the class representative to attend the meeting with them.

Learners are advised that the deliberating committee is required to determine if, on the balance of probability, impropriety occurred or not. In that regard DBS believes there is no justification for impropriety and claims of stress, financial pressure, ill health or other such instances will not be accepted as justification for academic impropriety. Equally, lack of knowledge is not considered a suitable defence. DBS provides extensive information to all learners on the regulations and their responsibilities within them.

Dishonest conduct in assessment will not be tolerated and learners should look to alternative options in times of high pressure or uncertainty. Any learner who believes they are subject to pressure that is impacting their studies and their ability to satisfy assessment requirements is advised to consult Student Services, the Programme Leader or module lecturer and request appropriate supports or information on the options available to them.

DBS will retain a written record of each stage of proceedings. In the event that it is found on the balance of probabilities that no offence has occurred, all records of the allegation will be removed and deleted from the learner record.

8.5.3 Initial Action in Instances of Suspected Academic Impropriety

8.5.3.1 During the Examination Sitting

Any member of staff who suspects academic impropriety during assessment under examination conditions must report such suspicions immediately to the Chief Invigilator/Examinations Officer or representative from Academic Affairs.

The Chief Invigilator/Examinations Officer is required to approach the learner concerned and ask them to step outside the examination hall. A second invigilator or staff member should be present for this. The chief invigilator or Examinations Officer is required to:

- Confirm the identity of the learner and confiscate the learner's I.D card temporarily
- explain the suspicions and reason for suspicion
- note the response of the learner
- remove any unauthorised material
- advise the learner of the entitlement to complete the examination and

- confirm the requirement for the learner to report to the Academic Affairs Office immediately after the examination concludes.

On returning to the hall, the invigilator is required to annotate the script clearly at that point. The learner is then permitted to finish the examination.

The Chief Invigilator is required to submit a full, written report on the incident to the Assessment and Regulations Manager.

At the end of the examination, the learner concerned must present himself/herself immediately to the Academic Affairs Office where he / she will be advised on the next steps in the case of suspected academic impropriety. The learner will have their I.D card returned at this juncture, along with any personal items not deemed relevant to the investigation.

The relevant script is corrected as normal.

8.5.3.2 Suspected Academic Impropriety during Grading of Learner Assessment

Any Examiner who suspects academic impropriety must report such suspicions immediately to the Assessment and Regulations Manager. In making such a report the examiner is required to provide:

- a copy of the learner submission
- the mark sheet and feedback for the learner based on being marked as normal
- copies of all relevant evidence/documentation, supporting this suspicion
- a completed copy of the DBS Academic Impropriety form

This should be done as soon as the Academic Impropriety is suspected, to allow for appropriate investigatory action and possible disciplinary proceedings in advance of the examinations and/or Examination Boards.

Each learner is entitled to the presumption of innocence and therefore the assessment must be marked as normal. The grade and feedback will not be released until such a time as the allegation has been investigated and an outcome determined on the balance of probability.

Where suspicion arises due to a report from plagiarism detection software, the lecturer must first have reviewed and interpreted the report and made an informed judgement on whether or not it appears academic impropriety may have occurred. Information produced by the plagiarism

detection software does not automatically equate to confirmation or evidence of plagiarism. Further guidance can be obtained from the Assessment and Regulations Manager, The Head of Academic Programmes or the Research Librarian.

8.5.4 Procedures in Cases of Suspected Academic Impropriety

The Assessment and Regulations Manager or nominee reviews the Invigilator's report or the examiner's report and evidence to determine if there is a case of potential academic impropriety or whether it is academic impoverishment. If it is decided that there is insufficient basis for a charge of academic impropriety, no further action is taken in the matter. If it is decided that there is a case to answer, the Assessment and Regulations Manager will arrange for the learner to be advised of the allegation and requested to provide a response to the evidence and allegation put forward.

8.5.4.1 Investigatory Stage

Each learner is entitled to the presumption of innocence and must also be afforded the right of response to any allegations.

The learner must be contacted and provided with the following:

- Confirmation that an allegation of suspected impropriety has been received
- The origin of the allegation including the role of the individual making the allegation and the assessment concerned
- The report and evidence presented to support the allegation
- A copy of the Academic Impropriety Policy or link to it
- The right to respond
- The availability of Student Services to provide assistance
- The deadline by which a response must be received in writing
- Notification that failure to respond will result in the case proceeding in absence of a response
- A warning that failure to admit any wrong doing in the investigatory stage may result in more severe penalties should the allegation be proven at a later stage in proceeding.
- Notification that penalties for academic impropriety are applied up to and including expulsion from the college with no right to return or entitlement to a refund.

A learner should be provided with a minimum of 5 working days to provide their response before any subsequent action is taken.

8.5.4.2 Potential Outcomes of the Investigatory Stage

On completion of the investigatory stage, the Assessment and Regulations Manager is required to determine one of the following outcomes on the balance of probability:

1. No offence has occurred
2. Admission of the offence by the learner
3. Unresolved i.e. the evidence suggests there may be a case to answer but the learner has not admitted to any offence, intentional or otherwise.

The learner must be notified of the outcome of the investigatory stage, and any associated actions, at the earliest opportunity and not normally more than 10 working days after the response deadline provided to the learner.

Where the Assessment and Regulations Manager finds that no offence has occurred. The matter will be considered concluded and the results will be authorised for release to the learner.

Where the Assessment and Regulations Manager is dealing with admission of the offence by the learner the following options apply:

Undergraduate:

For a first offence in an undergraduate non-award bearing module a mark of 0% and requirement to repeat the assessment, and the module capped at 40% will be imposed. The learner will also be obliged to attend and complete the DBS Library Service course on Academic Writing and present their confirmation of completion to the Assessment and Regulations Manager with 4 weeks.

For a first offence in an undergraduate award-bearing module a mark of 0%, requirement to repeat the assessment, capping the module mark at 40% and capping of the award as a pass award will apply. The learner will also be obliged to attend and complete the DBS Library Service course on Academic Writing and present their confirmation of completion to the Assessment and Regulations Manager with 4 weeks.

Postgraduate:

For a first offence in any taught module a mark of 0%, requirement to repeat the assessment, capping of the module at 40% and capping of the award as a pass award shall be applied. The learner will also be obliged to attend and complete the DBS Library Service

course on Academic Writing and present their confirmation of completion to the Assessment and Regulations Manager with 4 weeks.

Any instances of a second or subsequent offence regardless of programme framework level will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

Learners found to have committed multiple offences of academic impropriety will be subject to serious penalties up to and including withdrawal from the programme, with no entitlement to refund or readmission.

In order to deter learners from considering academic impropriety as a low risk option in cases where they feel failure is likely, in considering the penalty to be imposed the Assessment and Regulations Manager should normally ensure that any penalty is more significant than having made an honest attempt at assessment and failed.

Where the matter is unresolved, the case is referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

The Disciplinary Committee convenes once per academic term and prior to the meeting of the Examination Board or as required in respect of cases of Academic Impropriety. The Disciplinary Committee can be convened at the request of the Assessment and Regulations Manager outside of the regular schedule as required.

For full details on the proceedings of the Disciplinary Committee and potential outcomes please see DBS Learner Disciplinary Policy, Chapter 9.