Regulation on Unacceptable Academic Practice

1. Introduction

1.1 Throughout this document the term 'University' refers to the Aberystwyth University. The terms ‘Chair of the Examination Board’, ‘Superintendent of Examinations’ and ‘Pro Vice-Chancellor’ may include designated members of staff acting on behalf of these staff.

1.2 Students and members of staff should read this document in conjunction with the relevant section of the Academic Quality Handbook.

1.3 The University will normally resolve all cases within four weeks of sending initial notification of the allegation to the student.

2. Definition of Unacceptable Academic Practice

2.1 It is Unacceptable Academic Practice to commit any act whereby a person may obtain, for himself/herself or for another, an unpermitted advantage. The Regulation shall apply, and a student may be found to have committed Unacceptable Academic Practice, regardless of a student’s intention and the outcome of the act, and whether the student acts alone or in conjunction with another/others. Any action or actions shall be deemed to fall within this definition, whether occurring during, or in relation to, a formal examination, a piece of coursework, the presentation of medical or other evidence to Examination Boards, or any form of assessment undertaken in pursuit of a University qualification or award.

2.2 The University recognises the following categories of Unacceptable Academic Practice. These are not exhaustive, and other cases may fall within the general definition of Unacceptable Academic Practice.

(i) Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as using another person's work and presenting it as one's own, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Examples of plagiarism include:

- Use of quotation without the use of quotation marks
- copying another person's work
- unacknowledged translation of another person's work
- paraphrasing or adapting another person's work without due acknowledgment
- unacknowledged use of material downloaded from the internet
- use of material obtained from essay banks or similar agencies
(ii) Collusion

Collusion occurs when work that has been undertaken by or with others is submitted and passed off as solely the work of one person. When the work of one or more individuals is submitted in the name of others with the knowledge of the originator(s) of the work, all parties concerned may be considered to have committed Unacceptable Academic Practice.

(iii) Fabrication of evidence or data

Fabrication of evidence or data and/or use of such evidence or data in assessed work include making false claims to have carried out experiments, observations, interviews or other forms of data collection and analysis. Fabrication of evidence or data and/or use of such evidence or data also include presenting false or falsified evidence of special circumstances to Examination Boards or Appeal Panels.

(iv) Unacceptable Academic Practice in formal examinations

Examples of Unacceptable Academic Practice in formal examinations include the following:

- introducing into an examination room and/or associated facilities any unauthorised form of material such as a book, a manuscript, data or loose papers, electronic device, information obtained via any electronic device, or any source of unauthorised information, regardless of whether these materials are of relevance to the subject in question
- copying from, or communicating with, any other person in the examination room and/or associated facilities except as authorised by an invigilator
- communicating electronically with any other person, except as authorised by an invigilator
- impersonating an examination candidate or allowing oneself to be impersonated
- presenting an examination script as one's own work when the script includes material produced by unauthorised means
- Failing to comply with written directions to candidates in formal examinations, and verbal instructions by examination invigilators

An electronic device shall be considered to be within this Regulation if it is capable of any of the following: communicating electronically within or outside an examination room, connecting to the internet, being uploaded with digital data or information, making audio recordings, a digital memory or storing of audio recordings, uploading digital data or information to another device, displaying digital data or information or playing audio recordings.
All of the following fall into this category, but the list is not exclusive and other unspecified devices will fall under the Regulation: mobile telephones, smart watches, laptop computers, tablets, data storage devices, bluetooth receivers, headphones, i-pods, electronic calculators other than those specifically allowed in university examinations.

(v) Recycling of data or text

Recycling of data or text in more than one assessment, when this is explicitly not permitted by the Department.

3. Reporting of Suspected Unacceptable Academic Practice

3.1 All staff who suspect that Unacceptable Academic Practice has occurred should submit a written report to the Chair of the relevant Examination Board, along with the relevant documentary evidence, according to the Guidance on Academic Practice.

3.2 It is the responsibility of members of staff who submit a report of suspected Unacceptable Academic Practice to provide all relevant documentary evidence, including statements from witnesses and copies of suspected sources.

3.3 When it is suspected that a student is engaging in Unacceptable Academic Practice in a formal examination, the student shall be informed, preferably in the presence of a witness, that the circumstances will be reported. The student shall, however, be allowed to continue the examination and any subsequent examination(s) without prejudice to any decision that may be taken. Failure to give such a warning shall not, however, prejudice subsequent proceedings.

3.4 When appropriate, the Superintendent of Examinations shall confiscate and retain evidence relating to any alleged Unacceptable Academic Practice in formal examinations, so that it is available to any subsequent investigation. The Superintendent of Examinations shall, as soon as possible, submit a written report, with any evidence retained, to the Academic Registry, for referral to the Chair of the relevant Examination Board.

3.5 In the case of a test contributing to the final module result, which is conducted under the aegis of the Department, the invigilator shall report to the Chair of the relevant Examination Board.

3.6 An internal or external examiner or any other person who, whether during the marking period or subsequently suspects that a student has engaged in Unacceptable Academic Practice, shall report the matter in writing to the Chair of the relevant Examination Board as soon as possible

4. Suspected Unacceptable Academic Practice in research degrees
4.1 If a member of staff or an examiner suspects Unacceptable Academic Practice in a research thesis or other work submitted for examination for a research degree, the case shall be referred to the Academic Registry, who will convene the University Panel to consider the case, according to sections 9-10 of the Regulation.

5. **Initial Action to be taken by the Chair of the Relevant Examination Board**

5.1 On receipt of a written report concerning suspected Unacceptable Academic Practice, the Chair of the relevant Examination Board shall review the report and the evidence which has been provided, and apply one of the following procedures, after consulting the relevant section of the Academic Quality Handbook:

   i) Investigation by Chair of the Examination Board;
   ii) Investigation by Faculty Panel;
   iii) Investigation by University Panel.

6. **Investigation by the Chair of the Examination Board**

6.1 On receipt of a report concerning suspected Unacceptable Academic Practice, the Chair shall proceed to consider the suspected case on the basis of the evidence which has been presented.

6.2 If the Chair is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the allegation of Unacceptable Academic Practice has been substantiated, a written report shall be submitted to the Academic Registry. The Academic Registry will check that procedures have been correctly followed, and will inform the student of the outcome, and the penalty which will be applied. The student will also be informed of the right to request a review or request that the case is referred to the Faculty Panel for investigation.

6.3 If the Chair is satisfied that there is no case of Unacceptable Academic Practice, a written report shall be submitted to the Academic Registry. The Academic Registry will check that procedures have been correctly followed before informing the student of the outcome, and that no further action will be taken.

7. **Investigation by Faculty Panel**

7.1 On receipt of a report concerning suspected Unacceptable Academic Practice, the Faculty shall convene a small panel to investigate the case. The panel shall be composed of the Chair of the Examination Board and at least one member of academic staff not associated with the assessment in question.

7.2 Staff who have made the allegation of Unacceptable Academic Practice should not be members of the panel and should take no part in the decision.

7.3 The Faculty shall inform the student of the date, place and time of the panel meeting, and that he/she has the opportunity to attend the meeting.
7.4 The student shall have the opportunity to submit written evidence in advance of the panel meeting, including evidence of special circumstances.

7.5 Documentary evidence shall be sent to the student before the date of the meeting and circulated to panel members. Any further evidence made available on the date of the meeting may be presented to the panel, but only with the express permission of the Chair.

7.6 The student may be represented by an advisor from the Students’ Union. Representation by other persons will be at the discretion of the Chair, and any requests for such representation should be made in writing to the Chair in advance of the panel meeting. Legal representation at the meeting will not normally be permitted.

7.7 Where a student, without good reason, fails to attend a panel meeting, the meeting may proceed in his/her absence.

8. Investigation by University Panel

8.1 The University shall establish a Standing Panel of twelve members to investigate suspected cases of Unacceptable Academic Practice. Each Faculty shall nominate four members of academic staff to serve on the Standing Panel.

8.2 On receipt of an allegation of Unacceptable Academic Practice from the Chair of an Examination Board, the Academic Registry shall arrange for a University Panel to be convened. The Chair of the Examination Board shall submit a written report relating to the case, along with all relevant written evidence.

8.3 The University Panel shall consist of three members selected from the Standing Panel, one of whom shall be designated as the Chair. No member of any University Panel shall be drawn from the student’s Department(s).

8.4 The Secretary to the University Panel shall inform the student of the date, place and time of the panel meeting, and that he/she has the opportunity to attend the meeting.

8.5 The student shall have the opportunity to submit written evidence in advance of the panel meeting, including evidence of special circumstances.

8.6 Documentary evidence shall be sent to the student before the date of the meeting and circulated to panel members. Any further evidence made available on the date of the meeting may be presented to the panel, but only with the express permission of the Chair.

8.7 The student may be represented by an advisor from the Students’ Union. Representation by other persons will be at the discretion of the Chair, and any requests for such representation should be made in writing to the Chair in advance.
of the panel meeting. Legal representation at the meeting will not normally be permitted.

8.8 Where a student, without good reason, fails to attend a panel meeting, the meeting may proceed in his/her absence.

9. **Functions of the Faculty/University Panel**

9.1 The function of such panels shall be:

   i) to consider the evidence submitted to it on the suspected Unacceptable Academic Practice;
   
   ii) to determine whether the allegation has been substantiated on the balance of probabilities;
   
   iii) to determine, in cases where the allegation has been substantiated, any penalty to be applied.

10. **Procedure during the meeting**

10.1 When two or more students are suspected of related instances of Unacceptable Academic Practice, the Chair of the panel may decide to deal with the cases together. However, each student shall be given the opportunity to request that the cases be heard separately.

10.2 The Chair shall present an outline of the case against the student, referring to the evidence which has been submitted for consideration by the panel. The panel may ask questions of the student.

10.3 The student shall have the right to hear all the evidence relating to the case before responding to the allegation, and to make a response in person to the panel. Additional documentary evidence including evidence of special circumstances may not be presented to the panel on the day of the meeting without the express permission of the Chair.

10.4 When the presentation of the evidence and the student’s response are completed, all persons, other than members of the panel, and the secretary if present, shall withdraw.

10.5 If the panel is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the allegation of Unacceptable Academic Practice has been substantiated, a written report shall be submitted to the Academic Registry. The Academic Registry will check that procedures have been correctly followed, and will inform the student of the outcome, the penalty which will be applied, and also of the right to request a review.

10.6 If the panel is satisfied that there is no case of Unacceptable Academic Practice, a written report shall be submitted to the Academic Registry. The Academic Registry
10.7 Whether or not the finding of the panel is that the case has been substantiated, the student may be informed orally of the outcome; but there shall be no discussion of the decision with the student.

11. Penalties for Unacceptable Academic Practice in taught schemes (undergraduate and postgraduate)

11.1 Chairs of Examination Boards, and Faculty and University panels, shall apply one of the penalties which are set out in the Guidance on Academic Practice. Penalties shall be applied on the basis of a points-based system, with consideration of the following elements:

(i) Previous record of Unacceptable Academic Practice;
(ii) Extent and severity of Unacceptable Academic Practice;
(iii) Level of study.

11.2 Panels may not take special circumstances into consideration in determining whether Unacceptable Academic Practice has occurred. Panels may however take exceptional personal circumstances into consideration in applying penalties, where it can be shown that these are relevant to the case. In such cases the student must show good reason why such personal circumstances could not previously have been submitted to the Faculty so that an extension to the submission deadline, or other adjustments to the assessment concerned, could be considered. Recommendations to reduce penalties on grounds of special circumstances shall be submitted to the Academic Registry for consideration by the Chair of the Senate Examination Board.

11.3 Penalties shall be applied according to the points-based penalty system, regardless of the impact of the penalty on progression or final award. In exceptional cases the Chair of the relevant Examination Board / Chair of the Faculty or University Panel may recommend a more severe penalty. Recommendations should be submitted to the Academic Registry, providing a full case in writing in support of the recommendations. In such cases the Chair of the Senate Examination Board shall apply one, or a combination, of the following penalties:

(i) Exclusion of the student from the University for a specific period or permanently;
(ii) Disqualification of the student from any future examination in the University.

12. Penalties for Unacceptable Academic Practice in postgraduate research degrees

12.1 The University shall apply one of the following penalties:

i) Failure of the thesis, with an opportunity to resubmit;
ii) Failure of the thesis, with no opportunity to resubmit.
13. **Action to be taken following the panel meeting**

   13.1 The University will not make any public pronouncements of decisions of Faculty/University panels unless a student, in respect of whom a determination has been made, requests the publication of any such determination.

14. **Pass-lists**

   14.1 If a case of suspected Unacceptable Academic Practice is under investigation at the time of the meeting of the relevant Examination Board, the Board shall defer consideration of the student's work until the outcome has been conveyed by the Academic Registry to the student and the Chair of the Examination Board.

   14.2 Should a case be under investigation when a pass-list is due for completion, the name of the student concerned shall be withheld from the pass-list, and a supplementary pass-list issued subsequently as appropriate.

   14.3 If a case of Unacceptable Academic Practice arises after the issue of the original pass list, or after a qualification has been conferred, the Examination Board shall have authority to cancel or amend a result previously confirmed and to issue a supplementary pass list.

15. **Review**

   15.1 If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Unacceptable Academic Practice investigation, s/he can request a review, to be investigated by a Pro Vice-Chancellor.

16. **Formal Reporting Mechanism**

   16.1 The Academic Registry shall maintain records of all investigations into suspected Unacceptable Academic Practice, and shall present an annual report for consideration by the Academic Board of the University.