



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Academic Misconduct Procedure – 2026/27

Key Principles:

- (1) The purpose of this Procedure is to facilitate a proportionate and meaningful response to instances where students have failed to show the levels of Academic Integrity that they agreed to demonstrate upon registration. This procedure is intended to provide a clear framework for decision making rather than being fully prescriptive, and decisions should be made within the spirit of the procedure.
- (2) It seeks to promote a balanced environment where there is both (a) support for development and reflection, and (b) a strong disincentive to stray from the highest levels of academic integrity.
- (3) Any student (Levels 3 to 7) in their first semester at the University will be deemed to be in a developmental period, and their work cannot be referred for some types of Academic Misconduct unless the work is a resit (see the end of Stage Two for guidance). It can be referred as Poor Academic Practice (PAP) (see Appendix B).
- (4) Although there is an indicative scale of penalties associated with this Procedure, Panels have discretion in how these are applied (see Appendix A). For example, a Level 6 student found to have committed Academic Misconduct in their final semester for a piece of work worth 30% of a module mark is unlikely to be terminated for this even if they meet the indicative criteria for termination. Appendix C details the types of actions and penalties available.
- (5) For the purposes of this Procedure, Academic Misconduct is regarded by the University as instances where it is more likely than not that a student seeks to gain an unfair advantage through engaging in activities that do not demonstrate an acceptable level of academic integrity. Examples can be seen in Appendix A.
- (6) Academic staff should always bear in mind that when they are referring a piece of work for Academic Misconduct to Registry that they are making an allegation against a student: that they have broken the Academic Regulations and that they have failed to demonstrate Academic Integrity. If they are not confident in this, they should reflect on whether Poor Academic Practice is a more appropriate

route. A demonstrable case must be made on Referral or the Academic Registrar will decline to hear the case, although PAP may still be a possible route.

- (7) The burden of proof required by the procedure is balance of probabilities, that it is more likely than not that something happened. A decision around Academic Misconduct is regarded by the University as one of “academic judgement”. This means it cannot be contested in its own right. However, it can be contested on the grounds of new evidence or procedural irregularity through the Academic Appeal procedure.
- (8) All coursework submissions should make an Artificial Intelligence Declaration where any usage is made clear (for example, use of Grammarly by a student who has been diagnosed with dyslexia). This should typically be made at the end of the piece of work.

The Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The University recognises the valuable role of AI in teaching, learning and assessment, and to use AI tools in assessed work does not automatically breach this procedure.

However, students should (a) check with their course team as to what is permitted within the scope of instructions on any assignment brief, and (b) should declare how AI has been used at the end of the assessment submission.

To use AI in any form (including for spelling and grammar) and not to acknowledge it in the assessment submission could be considered a breach of this procedure. This is because an examiner needs to clearly understand what is, and what is not, the student’s own work. If this is not possible to discern, it is reasonable to conclude it may be more likely than not that a student is gaining an unfair advantage (although this does not automatically mean a submission without such a declaration would be reviewed as Academic Misconduct).

Academic Misconduct Procedure

This Procedure covers instances of suspected Academic Misconduct as highlighted in Key Principle (6) and Appendix A. All members of staff involved in Academic Misconduct cases must act impartially and apply this procedure thoroughly and consistently. They should consult with colleagues and/or Registry if they require support.

Registry will advise at any point in Stages 1 and 2 as to the correct application of this procedure.

All communication with Registry should be via, or include, academicmisconduct@stmarys.ac.uk.

Stage 1 – Initial Review

In Registry administered examinations, an invigilator must initially raise concerns with the Registry staff who are organising the examination, who will inform the Module Convener or Course Lead. Guidance is provided to invigilators regarding this scenario.

In all other suspected cases, a marker must initially raise concerns with the Module Convener or Course Lead. However, they should be prepared for the possibility that an Academic Misconduct case will not be upheld and a mark should still be determined “as if no academic misconduct had been committed”.

Members of the course team must examine the evidence and decide if it appears more likely than not that Academic Misconduct has occurred. They must be reasonably confident as to what type of offence may have been committed according to this Procedure (see Appendix A). If this burden of proof is not reached Poor Academic Practice (PAP) remains a possible route for any assessment (see Appendix B). It is vital to acknowledge that course teams are best placed to make academic judgements about their students and the context of their programme, so in theory any piece of work can be regarded as poor academic practice. The guidance in this procedure is for cases where course teams feel that an attempt to gain unfair advantage has been made and there is no case to be made in line with Appendix B.

Stage 2 below and Appendix A should be referred to early in the case as it may typically limit a case to PAP or suggest it demands escalation to Registry.

Once a case is to progress as Academic Misconduct, this should be indicated on the student record system by the course team. There should not be significant delays between the point academic misconduct is indicated on the student record system and Registry receiving a formal Referral. Such delays may hinder continuation or even progression/graduation. The Academic Registrar will dismiss Referrals that are later than 4 term-time weeks from the assessment deadline or where that module has been ratified by a School-Level Examination Board (whichever is sooner).

Stage 2 – School Academic Misconduct Screening

The course team, in conjunction with an Academic Integrity Lead (AIL), should determine the optimal route for the case.

This judgement will hinge on whether the case alleging the student has broken the Academic Regulation is sufficiently robust for a panel to find on balance or probabilities that academic misconduct had been committed. If this is not clear, the case should be considered for PAP.

It is not the role of the panel to make the case. It is the role of the panel to endorse (or reject) the case made by the School and to make a recommendation to the University Progression and Award Board (PAB). Panel members necessarily are not subject specialists, nor are they automatically familiar with what constitutes permissible practice on the programme. Registry will be unable to convene a Panel if a case is not adequately made, although a School may still take a PAP route.

The course team must inform the student that they are to be referred to Registry for an Academic Misconduct Hearing at the time of referral.

Undergraduate students (Levels 3 to 6) in their first semester at the University should not be referred for Academic Misconduct, although they may be subjected to the PAP process which may result in a fail grade. This refers to Categories 1-6 in Appendix A.

Stage 3 - Registry-Administered Academic Misconduct Review

Registry may make a unilateral decision if the Academic Registrar deems to have sufficient evidence. This must involve evidence from the student, and may involve advice from an Academic Integrity Lead from another School. This will almost always be in cases where a student admits academic misconduct in writing and there is no value in holding a panel.

However, it will generally be the case that the Academic Registrar convenes a Panel. These are Registry administered and are comprised of two members (a Chair and a panel member) who must not have any involvement in teaching or assessing the student during the current academic year. A student does not have to be unknown to a panel member, but if a staff member has a conflict of interest they must declare this.

Referrals (see Appendix D) must be made within 4 term-time weeks of the assessment deadline, or before that module has been ratified by a School-Level Examination Board (whichever is sooner) otherwise the Academic Registrar will dismiss the case. This does not, however, preclude that a Poor Academic Practice case is pursued by the School.

In order to manage the process efficiently, there will not be an opportunity to add further evidence or to make clarifications, and any queries around a Referral must be made in advance to Registry.

A student will be given 5 working days' notice of the Panel (this may be fewer with the written consent of the student), and will be supplied with all of the referral material in the interests of transparency. A programme representative will be expected to attend, and will be expected to be conversant with the concerns regarding the assessment and any local requirements/policies relating to the work. Students will be given the opportunity to share material before or during the Hearing. They may not share material retrospectively. Panels will take place via video conferencing.

The Panel will consist of a Chair and another academic member. They will invite comment first from the programme and then the student, and seek clarifications. The panel will then deliberate in private, and will communicate their decision informally at the end of the session. This is an interim indication of the finding, and is not the formal decision. All decisions must be compatible with the Academic Regulations.

A member of Registry staff will be present throughout to note proceedings and to advise the Panel. They are not part of the panel. Likewise there may be an observer present for training or quality purposes, who is also not part of the panel. The student may ask for another person such as a friend or support (for example from the Students' Union) to be present. Such a supporter is not permitted to contribute to the hearing and will be removed if they attempt this. Any reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act will be made.

Panel Chairs are strongly encouraged to keep to time, and to not allow the same point to be traversed numerous times by a student, especially if this is unsupported by evidence. Students may ask to screen-share to show evidence, for example, developmental notes.

If a student cannot attend a hearing, they must supply evidence as to the reasons, which will be held to the same standards as evidence for Extenuating Circumstances at the University. A panel may proceed without the student present if they have not engaged with the process or provided sufficient reason for non-attendance. Similarly, a Chair may ask for a case to be held at another time if a student appears incapacitated in the Hearing.

Registry will write to the student with the outcome within 10 working days (or will indicate when an outcome may be expected within 10 working days) and will update the student record system as appropriate. This letter is the formal outcome that represents the recommendation to the University Examination Board.

Stage 4 – Academic Appeals and Provost Reviews

A student may lodge an Academic Appeal to contest a finding from Stage 3 once they have received a letter from the University Progression and Award Board (PAB) confirming the module in question.

These can be contested on the grounds within the Academic Appeals Procedure, which supersedes this procedure between (1) the receipt of the relevant PAB letter and (2) the outcome of the Academic Appeals Procedure. Students are not able to contest academic judgement within the Academic Regulations/the Academic Appeals Procedure, so they must produce new evidence, or demonstrate procedural irregularity or bias in order for their appeal to be credible.

If an Academic Appeal/Provost Review on an Academic Misconduct finding is upheld, this does not mean that the case is dismissed. It will generally result in another review by a new Academic Misconduct Panel because there is sufficient doubt as to demand further scrutiny.

However, on very rare occasions a student will win an Academic Appeal on the basis of Academic Misconduct connected to previously unknown circumstances.

In situations such as these, the Academic Registrar may choose to not ask for the views of a Panel as re-hearing the case would not resolve the situation for the student, and instead the Academic Registrar will consider a proportionate bespoke solution.

Appendix A

Academic Misconduct – Discretion and Scale of Penalties

Discretion

AM Panels, guided by the Chair and advised by the Registry staff member present, may apply discretion in the penalties that they set as a result of an upheld case. The offence and the penalty are therefore not inextricably linked. However, it should be noted that Extenuating Circumstances are never sufficient to allow for the application of discretion (except in some cases of impaired judgement).

All decisions must still be compatible with the prescriptions laid out in the Academic Regulations, and the Panel does not have the authority to waive any aspect of these. This also applies to the requirements of the PSRBs who may accredit some programmes.

Penalties are rated as Minor, Major and Severe for the sake of administrative convenience. However, a Panel has the discretion to decide that a second Major category offence could be less severe in penalty (which ultimately allows the student another opportunity to demonstrate good academic practice prior to termination).

Contextual factors:

- Severity of misconduct
- Potential advantage over other students
- Weighting of assessment
- Intention
- Admission of fault
- Previous track record of proven Academic Misconduct

- Opportunity to learn good academic practice
- Impaired judgement
- Disproportionate impact on progression or award

The Chair of the panel must clearly summarise how and why the agreed penalty was arrived at which will be documented by Registry in the outcome letter. It is important that Panels enjoys some discretion, but equally important that the reasoning is documented.

Scale of Penalties

	Indicative Level	Case Type	Indicative Penalty for 1 st Finding	Indicative Penalty for 2 nd Finding	Indicative Penalty for 3 rd Finding
1	Poor Academic Practice	Use of sources without quotation marks but referenced in the reference list			
2	Minor	Self-plagiarism	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit or Programme Termination
3	Minor	Allowing another student to copy work	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit or Programme Termination
4	Minor	Copying from sources without referencing appropriately	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit or Programme Termination
5	Major (penalty dependant on panel discretion)	Collusion	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit or Programme Termination	Programme Termination
6	Major (penalty dependant on panel discretion)	Misuse of AI platforms in a manner that breaches academic integrity	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit OR Programme Termination	Programme Termination

7	Major (penalty dependant on panel discretion)	Unauthorised materials in formal examination	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit OR Programme Termination	Programme Termination
8	Major (penalty dependant on panel discretion)	Contract cheating/ essay mills	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit OR Programme Termination	Programme Termination
9	Major (penalty dependant on panel discretion)	Breach of research ethics	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit OR Programme Termination	Programme Termination
10	Major (penalty dependant on panel discretion)	Plagiarism ie use of copyrighted material, intellectual property or ideas presented as the student's own (including copying work from another student with or without their knowledge)	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit OR Programme Termination	Programme Termination
11	Major (penalty dependant on panel discretion)	Falsification of data and/or practical work or forgery (including for work placements)	Mark of 0% and right to resit	Mark of 0% and right to resit OR Programme Termination	Programme Termination
12	Severe	Allowing another to impersonate oneself in any form of assessment	Programme Termination		
13	Severe	Impersonating another student in any form of assessment	Programme Termination		
14	Severe	Attempting to bribe a member of staff (or	Programme Termination		

		external party) in order to gain advantage in an assessment			
An accusation may also be made that encompasses any other form of cheating and this may be considered by a School or an Academic Misconduct Panel. Prime considerations will be whether (a) the student seeks to gain an unfair advantage and (b) whether the activity exceeds what might be reasonably considered as poor academic practice.					

Appendix B

Poor Academic Practice (PAP)

Step 1

The first marker will be responsible for identifying concerns with a piece of work. If the marker feels it would be helpful, they can seek the input of their Subject/Programme Lead.

If the student is in their first semester at the University, some cases are automatically treated as Poor Academic Practice. These are Categories 1-6 in Appendix A.

Step 2

The case is then referred to the relevant Academic Integrity Lead (AIL). A decision will be made as to whether there is:

- 1) No case to answer
- 2) Evidence of poor academic practice (to be dealt with at programme level)
- 3) Evidence of academic misconduct (to be dealt with at University level).

If there is a dispute between the first marker and AIL then the views of the AIL will take precedence.

Step 3

In the case of poor academic practice the first marker and/or the AIL will meet with the student, explain their concerns and use the meeting as a positive training session for the student. The student will be told that the work will be marked ignoring the material of concern. This is likely to result in a reduced mark, if the material at issue is so extensive as to result in a fail then the normal resit procedures will apply.

Essentially the final mark is based on the extent to which the relevant learning outcomes have been met when only the work that appears sound is marked.

In cases of the misuse of Generative AI, it is entirely feasible a mark of 0% might be given in a PAP case.

The penalised mark should be agreed by the first marker and the AIL. If there is disagreement, the views of the AIL will take precedence.

Indicative PAP Scenarios and Outcomes

% of Work that is Unsound	Scenarios	Likely PAP Outcome
Up to 100%	In this scenario, the marker is likely to have little or no confidence in the work.	Very Low Fail with resit (0% to 20%)
Up to 80%	In this scenario, there is evidence of widespread issues, although a small amount of the work appears to be the student's own.	Low Fail with resit (20% to 30%)
Up to 60%	In this scenario, there is evidence of substantial issues, although a significant amount of the work appears to be the student's own.	Medium to High Fail with resit (30% to 39%)
Up to 40%	In this scenario, there is evidence of many issues, although the majority of the work appears to be the student's own. A pass or a fail would be possible outcomes in the final grade. A fail could happen if the student's own work did not meet the learning outcomes.	Low Pass or High Fail with resit (35% to 49%)
Up to 20%	In this scenario, there is evidence of some issues, although virtually all of the work appears to be the student's own. A fail would not tend to happen unless the student's own work was weak and did not meet the learning outcomes.	Pass (or possible High Fail) (35%+)

The outcome of poor academic practice meetings must be recorded and logged by the AIL. This enables tracking of repeated cases within the School. However, Registry has no involvement in PAP and there is no flag on the student record system.

What Does Poor Academic Practice Look Like?

Beyond a student's first semester at St Mary's, the University draws a distinction between poor academic practice and academic misconduct, but inevitably discretion is required around the borderline.

This judgement is based upon:

- The prior experience of the student
- Their level of experience at St Mary's (e.g. the level of study)
- The degree to which they have had opportunities to learn about and practice the principles of good academic practice
- The extent to which they appear to be seeking to take an unfair advantage
- The severity of the issue

As stated above, if the student is in their first semester at the University, some cases are automatically treated as Poor Academic Practice (even if the mark is ultimately deemed to be 0%). These are Categories 1-6 in Appendix A.

Appendix C

Actions and Penalties

Actions from Poor Academic Practice (1-4) and Academic Misconduct Penalties (5-6).

Poor Academic Practice Actions:

1. The student is signposted to support around maintaining Academic Integrity.
2. The student receives a written warning from the School and a requirement to sign an undertaking to maintain Academic Integrity.
3. A mark is given based solely on the work that is considered to be sound but marked out of 100% (which may still result in a Fail).
4. A mark is given based solely on the work that is considered to be sound but capped at the pass mark (which may still result in a Fail).

Academic Misconduct Penalties:

5. The student is awarded a mark of 0% for the component and permitted to resit for the pass mark.
6. The student's studies are terminated.

Appendix D

Case Packs Submitted to Registry

This must include:

- **Academic Misconduct Referral Form** with a clear accusation being made of breaking the Academic Regulations.
- A sufficiently detailed **Narrative*** that demonstrates to a Panel that it is more likely than not that Academic Misconduct occurred in the academic judgement of the marker/course team. This may be written at the bottom of the referral form in the space provided or as a separate document. It may be necessary to detail relevant information from the assignment brief if this relates to the accusation of Academic Misconduct.
- **Evidence*** - ideally marked up in some way to demonstrate what has attracted the attention of the marker, but can be referred to in the narrative (typically by page and paragraph).

*It should be borne in mind that the panel may not be subject specialists nor may they be familiar with local inputs around academic integrity.

The Academic Registrar may determine that case packs which do not make a sufficient case for a panel to properly consider for endorsement will be returned to the School and the case will not be heard. A PAP route may still be pursued but the AM flag will be removed from the student record system by Registry.

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