**Guidance on the Poor Academic Practice route to deal with low severity infringements**

Henceforth, cases of suspected academic misconduct will be dealt with in a two-stage process, depending on severity.

**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.

**Step 2**

The case is then referred to the departmental 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 matter will be referred to an AIL from another department to make the final decision.)

**Step 3**

In the case of poor academic practice the first marker and 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.

The mark penalty for poor academic practice will be at the discretion of the Programme in consultation with the Academic Integrity Lead.

The outcome of poor academic practice meetings must be recorded and logged by the AIL who will report cases to the Registry (Academic Conduct Manager). This enables tracking of repeated cases. Particular care must be taken to check the records of students who are taking joint degrees across departments.

Students presenting poor academic practice for a third time, irrespective of the extent of the material at issue, should be referred to a university panel.

**Step 4**

In the case of academic misconduct the case will be referred to the Registry using the standard Academic Integrity Referral Form and the normal procedures for an academic misconduct panel will be pursued.

**Allocating cases**

A number of factors should be taken into account when judging whether to refer the work to a university level academic misconduct panel or to deal with the work at programme level. Regular training sessions will help AILs to standardise decisions across programmes.

1. The academic level of the student

Poor academic practice is reserved for level 3 and 4 cases or semester 1 of a postgraduate programme for overseas and/or mature students. Any case detected at level 5 or above should be referred to an academic misconduct panel.

1. Nature of the infringement

Poor academic practice could be inadequate referencing and/or the inclusion of a small amount of un-attributed or incorrectly attributed material. There may be evidence that the student made efforts to cite but used incorrect citation practices or displayed lack of originality by submitting coursework containing passages quoted from others, even if cited correctly. Poor academic practice could also include cases where students have misinterpreted the line between collaboration and collusion. It can only be applied to instances which would fall under the category of low (1 to 5) in section 30.4 of the academic regulations.

1. The proportion of the assignment affected

Due to the wide variety of assessments used across programmes it is not possible or appropriate to specify percentage matches above which cases should be referred. This is dependent on the nature of the assessments.

1. Any previous recorded instances

Before making a decision, the previous experience of the student should be checked with registry. Poor academic practice can only be applied to first or second cases. If a student’s work is flagged for a third case or subsequent they must be referred to an academic misconduct panel.

If the AIL and marker deem the offence to be serious enough it should be referred directly to Registry to deal with via the University Academic Misconduct process, regardless of whether it is a first offence or not.

Particular care should be taken should be taken to check the record of students on cross departmental joint honours programmes.

Note that extenuating circumstances cannot be taken into account in mitigation.

If there is a dispute between the first marker and the department AIL then the matter will be referred to an AIL from another department to make the final decision.

**Poor academic practice procedures**

In the case of poor academic practice the first marker and the AIL will meet with the student, explain their concerns and use the meeting as a positive training session for the student.

1. The student should be contacted and a meeting arranged between the student, the marker and the AIL (see appendix 1). Students may bring a supportive friend from within the university (another student or member of the SU). This meeting cannot be held *in absentia.* If the student is does not wish to or is repeatedly unable to attend then the case should be referred to university level panel.
2. During this meeting the marker will explain their concerns, the student will have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss their working practices, and the AIL will be able to give guidance about processes. A warning concerning the student’s future work, and the potential consequences of any reoccurrence, should also be given.
3. The work will be marked, ignoring any material which has been identified as 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.
4. The student must be sent a written record of the meeting to their university email address (normally within 2 working days), to briefly outline what was discussed, and to clarify the next steps (see appendix 2).
5. Thpied to academic.misconduct@stmarys.ac.uk and should be recorded in the AILs own records. A record of the meeting will be kept in a shared repository. This enables tracking of repeated cases. Particular care must be taken to check the records of students who are taking joint degrees spanning faculties.

If the student contests the finding of Poor Academic Practice the case should be referred to a University academic misconduct panel.

**Appendix 1 - template email invitation to poor academic practice (programme level) meeting**

This template should be used as a guide only and can be adapted to suit each specific case as appropriate.

Dear [student],

I am writing to you regarding the [coursework title] you submitted for [module code] [module title]. The module convenor and I have concerns about your academic practice on this piece of work.

A concerning amount of material has been detected as [being in common with internet sources/being in common with another student/ being in common with work you have previously submitted/ not referenced appropriately]. We have found in the past that poor academic practice can lead, albeit unconsciously, to academic misconduct. Therefore, we want to call it to your attention, so that you are aware of what might be happening and can make changes for the future.

Myself and your module tutor [name] would like to discuss this work with you in [location time and date]. You are very welcome to bring a friend with you who also attends St Marys, or someone from the Student Union. Please confirm your attendance or let me know if you are unable to attend and I will try to rearrange an alternative time for you.

Yours sincerely,

[AIL]

**Appendix 2 - template email outcome of poor academic practice meeting**

This template should be used as a guide only and can be adapted to suit each specific case as appropriate.

It should be copied to academic.misconduct@stmarys.ac.uk

Dear [student]

I am writing to you regarding the [coursework] you submitted for [module code] [module title]. As you know, [module tutor] and I had concerns about your academic practice on this piece of work. Thank you for coming to the meeting to discuss this on [date], we hope you found it useful and that it will help you to review and improve your practices.

It is important to ensure that your work is entirely your own, if you were to submit another piece of work which repeated the same mistake then this may constitute academic misconduct and be dealt with by an Academic Misconduct Panel. The penalties for proven cases of academic misconduct are outlined in the Academic Regulations.

When undertaking assignments you should refer to the guidance provided by the programme on how to avoid academic misconduct. You can also talk to any academic staff.

If you have any questions please don’t hesitate to get in touch,

Yours sincerely,

[AIL]