

# Assessment Offences Policy

Student and Academic Services

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# 1. Academic Integrity

The University values a culture of honest and mutual trust (Academic Integrity), and expects all members of the University to respect and uphold these core values.

Every student of the University is expected to act with integrity in relation to the production and representation of academic work and in acknowledging the contributions of others in their work.

## 2. What is an assessment offence?

Assessment offences threaten academic integrity and standards. The vast majority of students achieve their qualification at UWE fairly, and any form of cheating has the potential to undermine the achievements of others.

The University defines an assessment offence as any action which has the potential to give a student an unfair advantage in an assessment, or might assist someone else to gain an unfair advantage, or any activity likely to undermine the integrity essential to scholarship and research.

In circumstances where the University suspects that an assessment offence has been committed it will apply the principles and procedures within this policy to how it manages the circumstances. This policy applies to all students studying towards degrees at or validated by UWE Bristol, including at UK partner colleges and international partners.

It is for the University to prove whether or not an assessment offence has been committed, and the standard of proof that is used in this policy is the 'balance of probabilities'. This means that when considering all the evidence about a potential assessment offence, the University needs to be satisfied that it is more likely than not that an offence has occurred.

The University applies a principle of 'strict liability' to assessment offences, this means that the student's intentions are not relevant to determining whether or not an assessment offence has been committed. In practice this means that the University does not consider whether the offence was an accident or was deliberate in concluding whether or not an offence was committed, however we do consider a student's intentions when deciding on an appropriate penalty once an offence has been proven.

## 3. Examples of assessment offences

The University takes allegations of assessment offences seriously. Behaviour that constitutes an assessment offence in the context of this policy statement includes **but is not limited to:**

### Plagiarism

- Copying from another person's work without the use of quotation marks;

- Copying from another person's work without referencing/acknowledgement of the sources;
- Summarising another person's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation;
- Paraphrasing material from a source without acknowledging the original author;
- Not respecting or acknowledging the copyright and intellectual property of others;
- Presenting concepts or designs that have been created by others without acknowledging the original source;
- Copying another student's work with or without their knowledge or agreement (this may also be deemed as collusion);
- Using computer code created by another person without appropriate referencing;
- Downloading material from the web and submitting it as your own work;
- Using course notes without referencing;
- Self-Plagiarism - you may not re-use work (wholly or in part) that has been submitted for a different assessment for which credit has been/is due to be awarded.

## **Collusion**

- Submitting entirely as your own, work done in collaboration with another person(s), with intention to gain unfair advantage;
- Assisting another person in the completion of work submitted as that other person's own unaided work;
- Sharing your work with another person and/or permitting them to copy all or part of it and submit it as their own unaided work.

## **Contract Cheating**

- Submitting as your own, work which has been produced in whole or part by another person on your behalf, e.g. by using a 'ghost writing' service, essay mill or similar;
- Making available, or seeking to make available, material to another student or students with the intention that it is used by them to commit an assessment offence e.g. posting exam questions online.

## **Falsification**

- Falsifying or misrepresenting the results of experimentation/research data;
- Falsifying your references and/or bibliography;
- Falsifying reports or projects.

## **Fabrication**

- Reporting on experiments/research never performed or data never collected.

## Research ethics breaches

- Breaches of the policies relating to Research governance and research ethics which are discovered at the point an assessment is submitted.

## Cheating in controlled conditions assessments

- You must not have in your possession materials and/or devices which are not allowed for that assessment;
- Fraudulent activity, e.g. gaining access to the questions or solutions in advance of an assessment and using this to fraudulently complete the assessment;
- Unauthorised communications, including the use of online platforms to discuss online exams;
- Arranging for someone else to impersonate a student by sitting their examination.

## A combination of any of the above

# 4. Responsibilities of the University

The University will foster good academic practice by:

- Ensuring that students are provided with appropriate information and learning opportunities about assessment offences including engaging with Essay Mills and how to avoid committing them;<sup>1</sup>
- Ensuring allegations of assessment offences are investigated robustly and fairly;
- Monitoring assessment offences on an annual basis and using this data to inform academic practice.

# 5. Responsibilities of the Student

Students are expected to:

- Be responsible for their own work, avoid plagiarism and other assessment offences, and not knowingly allow others to commit plagiarism or collusion by copying/using their work in breach of academic regulations and procedures;
- Fully engage with the information and training opportunities provided by the University aimed at developing their understanding of academic practice and skills such as referencing, citation, paraphrasing and compiling a bibliography.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to programme-specific activities, our library maintains a range of study skills information, including tutorials and guidance on referencing and practicing good academic integrity at:

<https://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/studysupport/studyskills.aspx>

Academic integrity is also covered as part of UWE's [starting block](#) activities

## 6. The use of text-matching software

The University tests for plagiarism and other assessment offences as part of its assessment of student work and may subject work to scrutiny using text-matching or plagiarism detection software, or other resources, as appropriate, on either a comprehensive or sample basis. The University will make available to staff suitable software and other resources for this purpose as it deems appropriate.

Faculties will determine their approach to the use of text-matching or plagiarism detection software. This use may include but is not limited to:

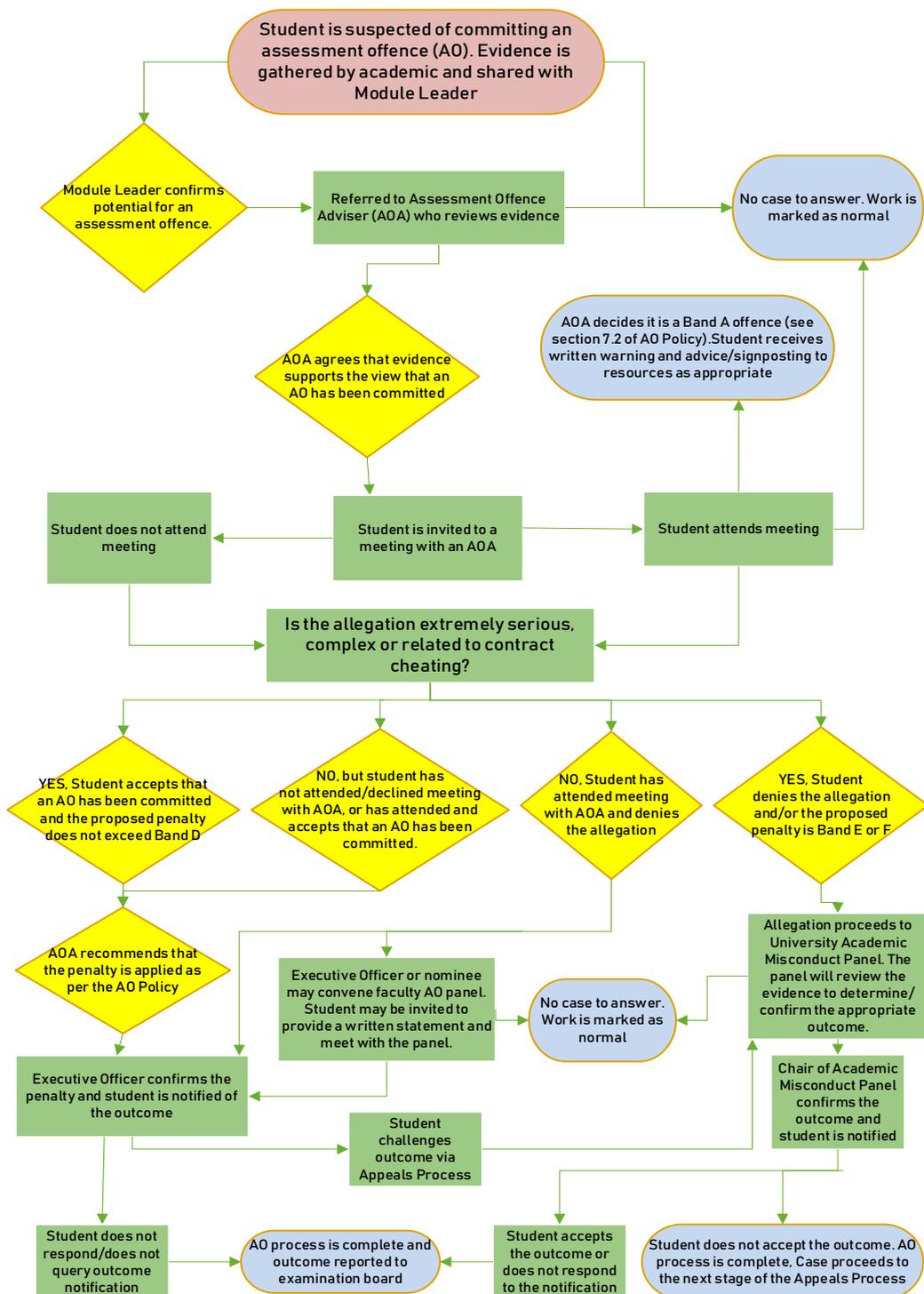
- Electronic submission of student work (with or without an accompanying hardcopy) and in accordance with UWE on-line submission and anonymity policies, to be uploaded to plagiarism software by staff for checking on a comprehensive or sample basis;
- Electronic submission of student work (with or without an accompanying hardcopy) and in accordance with UWE on-line submission and anonymity policies, through Blackboard allowing automatic checking by plagiarism software for use by staff on a comprehensive or sample basis.

It is important to note that the use of electronic detection software in this way is seen only as an addition to the normal exercise of academic judgement not as a replacement for it.

Where an assessment offence is suspected in a particular piece of work it may be scrutinised using electronic detection software and/or other resources. Subsequently, the student will be informed that this process has taken place and should there be a case to answer will be able to view the outcome report of the scrutiny as part of the evidence gathered during the investigation.

# 7. Procedures and penalties for students registered on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes

## 7.1 Diagrammatic summary of investigative procedures



## 7.2 Assessment offence penalties

### Summary of applicable penalties for Assessment Offence cases at undergraduate and postgraduate taught level.

Band	Penalty details	Nature of offence	Further information
<b>BAND A</b>	No formal offence or penalty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor scholarship</li> <li>Minor plagiarism</li> <li>Minor collusion e.g. student's work is copied by another student</li> </ul>	For first offences in Bands A, B and C a student receives a written warning, including signposting to support resources and/or advice as appropriate.
<b>BAND B</b>	Mark of 0 for the work item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of substantial plagiarism</li> <li>Evidence of significant collusion</li> <li>Second offences at Band A level</li> </ul>	There is an expectation on the student to engage with the support resources provided. Non-engagement with these can be taken into consideration in the application of penalties if further offences are committed.
<b>BAND C</b>	Mark of 0 for the work item with a mark reduction (40% UG, 50% PG) applied to the work item for the next assessment opportunity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority of work and/or critical elements plagiarised or showing evidence of collusion</li> <li>Contract cheating</li> <li>Falsification or fabrication of data/content</li> <li>Absence of ethical approval</li> <li>Second offences at Band B level</li> </ul>	
<b>BAND D</b>	Mark of 0 and no resit opportunity, or after resit mark reduction (40% UG, 50% PG) applied to retake work item.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Second offences at Band C level</li> </ul>	In some instances, a Band E penalty may be deemed appropriate for second offences at Band C level (see Band E below).
<b>BAND E</b>	Not permitted to continue on the programme (required to withdraw)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple offences (two or more) at Bands C or D level depending on the nature of the offence</li> <li>Referral to other university procedures/policies including fitness to practice/professional suitability/student conduct</li> </ul>	Student can be permitted to transfer to an alternative programme, fall back award or non-accredited programme as appropriate.
<b>BAND F</b>	Expulsion from the university	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple high-level offences</li> <li>Repeated deliberate and significant undermining of assessment integrity</li> </ul>	Decisions about whether to expel will be approved by the Academic Misconduct Panel.

### Guidance to inform an assessment offence penalty

Issues which may be considered when deciding an appropriate penalty for an assessment offence include:

- Whether the student intended to deceive;
- Whether the student has committed any previous assessment offences;

- Volume/proportion of the assessment affected;
- Size of assessment with respect to the overall module, and credit-weighting of the module;
- Level of study, amount/nature of previous study;
- Impact of penalty on progression;
- Issues identified concerning the clarity of the assessment brief.

Penalties for assessment offences for students on awards validated or accredited by professional or statutory bodies may be constrained by the regulations of those bodies. This may include reporting the offence to the professional or statutory body.

## 7.3 Process of investigation

- An individual who considers that a student has committed an assessment offence must report the allegation providing supporting evidence as soon as possible to the Module Leader.
- If the Module Leader finds that there is no case to answer, the investigative process will cease (and the work marked without penalty).
- If the Module Leader supports the allegation, they should refer the case to the faculty's/department's Assessment Offence Adviser.
- In circumstances where there are doubts as to the authorship of an assessment, a Module Leader or Assessment Offence Adviser, can request that a student attends an interview with a subject-matter expert, to explore the student's level of knowledge and understanding of the assessment topic. Meetings can be online or face to face and the student will be expected to attend. The University will give reasonable notice of the meeting, normally a minimum of 5 working days. The student may be accompanied by a friend or adviser from the Students' Union Advice Centre; however, they will not be able to speak on the students' behalf.
- Following review of the evidence by the Assessment Offence Adviser, in cases where the assessed work is found to display poor levels of scholarship, and it is deemed appropriate to deal with this without formally recording an assessment offence, the Module Leader will ensure the mark reflects the poor scholarship and that the student is offered advice and support.
- In other cases, where the evidence suggests an assessment offence has occurred, the Assessment Offences Adviser will notify the student in writing of the nature and details of the allegation, and the procedure to be followed which will include an offer to meet with the Adviser. The student will have five working days to respond to this communication. If the student does not respond then the penalty for the assessment offence as determined by the Assessment Offences Adviser will be applied.

- Where concurrent Assessment Offences may have been committed (i.e. a student is alleged to have committed offences across multiple assessments within the same submission period), these will be investigated together.
- The Assessment Offence Adviser will review the evidence including any explanation provided by the student and consider the nature and extent of the alleged offence. They will consider the contribution of the work item or component to the whole module and whether the student has previously been found to have committed an assessment offence.
- Where a meeting takes place, the student may be informed of the recommended outcome/penalty at that time.
- The Assessment Offence Adviser will advise the Executive Officer of the recommended penalty. The Executive Officer will review the case and will either confirm or amend the recommended outcome/penalty.
- Within five working days of the meeting the student will normally receive the final decision of the Executive Officer in writing, unless further investigation is required.
- If the student declined the opportunity to meet, they will be notified of the assessment offence allegation outcome within five working days of the date of their response to the initial communication.
- The outcome will be reported to the Examination Board.
- Where the student denies that an assessment offence has been committed, the student may be invited to submit a written statement and meet with an investigating panel. The investigating panel is convened and chaired by the Executive Officer or nominated representative, and includes a member of staff not involved with the allegation. The meeting can be online or face to face, and where possible the membership will include a member of staff from the field of the module about which the allegation is made. The investigation will re-consider the evidence, establish whether an offence occurred and, if so, its nature and effect, and the appropriateness of any penalties to be imposed.
- The student may be accompanied to the investigating panel meeting by a friend or adviser from the Students' Union Advice Centre who may speak on their behalf. The panel meeting may be rescheduled if the student is unable to attend, but if the student declines a second invitation then it will proceed without their attendance. The student's written statement will still be taken into consideration if they are unable to attend the panel meeting.
- The Executive Officer will require the person(s) making the allegation to attend a meeting of the investigating panel to explain it. At the discretion of the Executive Officer, the identity of the person making the allegation may be withheld from the student.

- The panel will consider the evidence and determine if an Assessment Offence has been committed. If it has, a penalty will be applied according to this policy.
- The Executive Officer will report the decision in writing to the student, normally within five working days of the meeting.
- The outcome will be reported to the Examination Board.
- Alleged assessment offences will normally be processed as one offence in the following situations:
  1. where the assessments have been submitted in parallel;
  2. where an offence has not been admitted to by the student and proven, or;
  3. where the student has not yet been notified of the first assessment offence allegation.
- A student may use the academic appeals process to request a review of any decision by an Executive Officer under the policy, within the timescales set out within the Academic Appeals Policy.

## 7.4 University Academic Misconduct Panel

Adjudication of extremely serious or complex cases, and any cases of contract cheating, will be conducted by the University Academic Misconduct Panel if the student does not accept the decision of the Executive Officer that results from the meeting with the Assessment Offences Adviser. This group is comprised of senior management, academic staff, students, students' union representatives and professional services staff with an independent chair.

The University Academic Misconduct Panel will also confirm final decisions concerning the application of Band E and Band F penalties, and consider appeals from students against first-instance decisions.

## 7.5 Group work and assessment offences

Any penalty applied in the event of an assessment offence will normally be applied to all members of the group. The two exceptions are:

- a. where a member of the group acknowledges, in writing to the Assessment Offence Adviser, that they have committed an assessment offence;
- b. where the offence can be shown to have been committed by (a) specific member(s) of the group responsible for those sections of the work that are the subject of an assessment offence.

In the case of these exceptions the penalty will only be applied to the member(s) of the group who has committed the assessment offence.

## 7.6 Reporting penalties to the Field and Award Boards

It is not within the remit of the Field or Award Board to determine whether an offence has occurred or to decide on an appropriate penalty.

However, where an assessment offence is found to have occurred in relation to one or more modules the Award Board may take these into account when considering decisions on:

- condonation;
- whether or not to excuse credit;
- Whether to make a referral to a professional body in relation to the assessment offences.

The Director of Student and Academic Services or the examining board, through the Director of Student and Academic Services, may make a report to the Vice-Chancellor to consider instigating action in accordance with the student conduct or professional suitability policies.

## 7.7 Assessment Offence Advisers

Assessment Offence Advisers will:

- Provide advice to staff members on whether a suspected assessment offence case should be formally referred to the assessment offence process.
- Provide guidance and advice to individual students who have been formally referred to the assessment offence process for poor scholarship/where an assessment offence has been upheld; to include advice on remedial action, support, and/or further training.
- Take an active role to identify and promote good practice and staff development in relation to the detection and deterrence of assessment offences.
- Take an active role in monitoring and analysing assessment offence data and consider suitable actions.

## 7.8 Executive officers

Executive officers will:

- Facilitate the formation of, and chair an investigating panel where required.
- Contact the relevant Department if there may be a case to be considered under the Professional Suitability Policy and Procedures for serious cases involving students on professional programmes.
- Ensure that the outcome of each case is communicated in writing to the student within five working days of the relevant meeting.

An Executive officer is nominated by the Faculty Executive Dean and should be an Associate Dean/Head of Department/Faculty or Departmental Director/Associate Head of Department (or equivalent)

## 8. Procedures and penalties for Postgraduate Researchers

### Postgraduate Research Degrees: Part 15 – assessment offences

#### Expectations

The University considers that allegations of assessment offences relating to research study undertaken by postgraduate researchers for the purpose of an MPhil or Doctoral level award are grave, and must be investigated accordingly. All students of the University, including postgraduate researchers, are subject to the University's published policy about academic integrity and assessment offences.

#### PGR 15.1 Regulations about the investigation of assessment offence allegations

**PGR15.1.1R** Assessment offence allegations made against postgraduate researchers (PGRs) registered on an MPhil or doctoral level award (including those who are also members of University Staff or affiliated Staff) will be investigated under the University's Academic Regulations and Procedures.

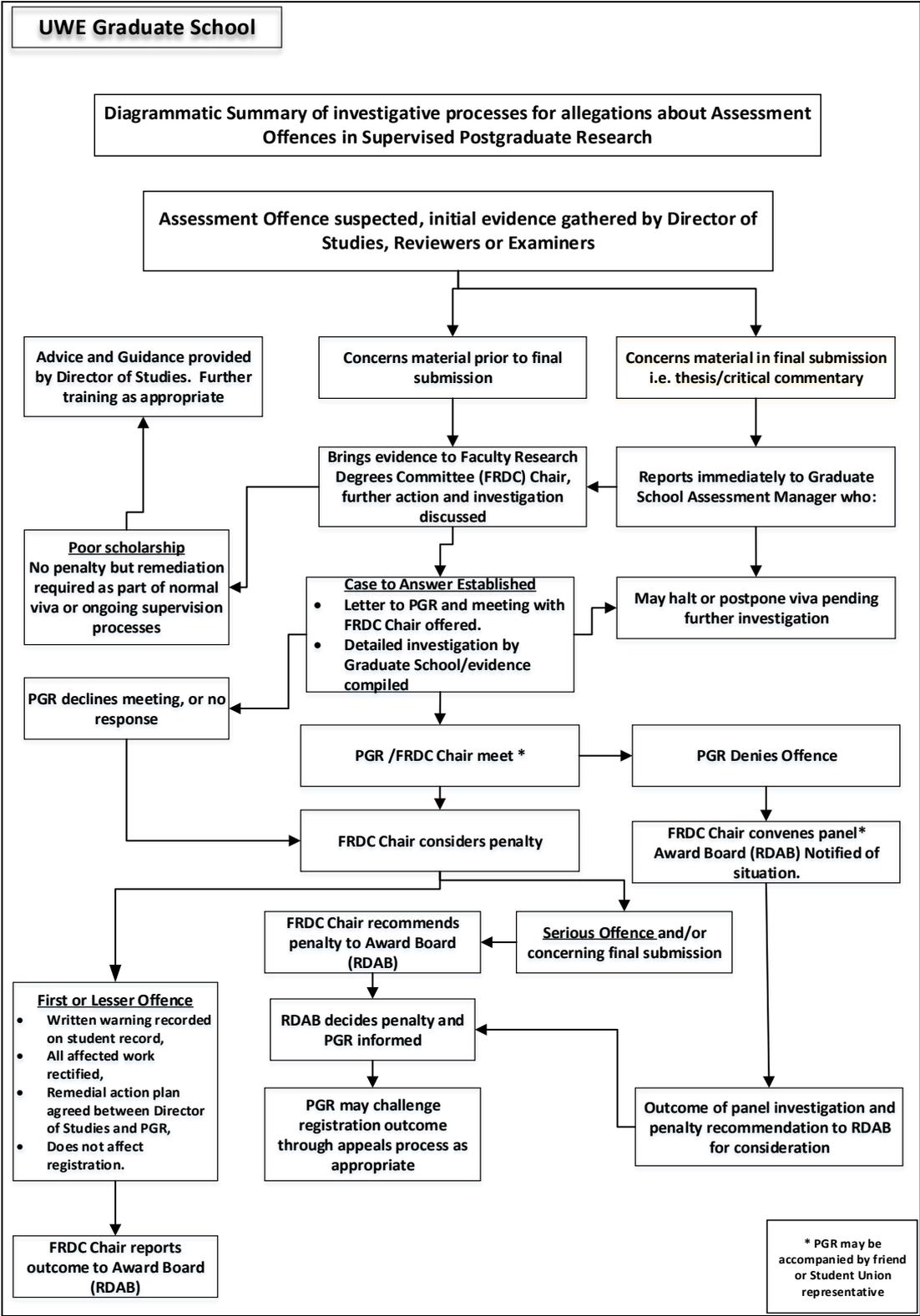
1. Assessment offence allegations made against PGRs relating to the assessment of taught elements of the award for which UWE credit is awarded (e.g. taught modules) will be investigated in accordance with procedures at Part G of the University Regulations and Procedures and Section 7 of this policy.
2. Assessment offence allegations made against PGRs relating to the assessment of the research project, the thesis or the critical commentary (MPhil/DPhil by publication), or any other element of research undertaken directly relating to the award, will be investigated under PGR regulations and procedures at Part PGR 15. The investigation will align with the principles of the University Code of Good Research Conduct as appropriate.
3. Allegations of research misconduct relating to any other area of research with which the postgraduate researcher is connected will be investigated under procedures set out in the University Code of Good Research Conduct.

**PGR15.1.2R** Investigation of assessment offence allegations will normally be led by the Chair of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee (FRDC) for the faculty in which the PGR is registered, who will act as the Executive Dean's nominee. If there is potential for conflict of interest, the allegation will be investigated by another member of the FRDC, or the Chair of the FRDC for another Faculty.

#### Procedures for investigating assessment offence allegations in PGR research

**PGR 15.2 Summary** These procedures are used for investigating assessment offence allegations within research relating postgraduate research degree awards as defined at PGR15.1.1R ii) only. The process is summarised in the diagram on the next page.

# 8.1 Diagrammatic summary of investigative procedures



## 8.2 Assessment offence penalties

### Summary of applicable penalties for proven assessment offence cases in MPhil and doctoral level awards

The penalty tariff is designed with due regard to:

- the intent to deceive;
- the proportion of the material affected;
- the level of study;
- the amount of previous skills support training having been undertaken.

<b>Offence Outcomes</b>	<b>Nature of the Offence committed</b>	<b>Normal penalty to be applied, or range of penalties where there is more than one available.</b>
<b>Poor scholarship</b>	Incomplete, inaccurate or missing citation in a small number of instances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of areas for concern are included in written feedback and sent to both the candidate and the Director of Studies (DoS), who must meet to agree a plan of action to improve the candidate's understanding of good academic practice and any further training needed.</li> <li>• All examples must be rectified within the work concerned.</li> <li>• Poor scholarship within a thesis submitted for final examination will be raised as part of the viva process and will require correction and / or amendment as appropriate.</li> <li>• No offence will be recorded on the candidate's student file/record.</li> </ul>
<b>First and lesser offence</b> (Not applicable for offences found in a thesis submitted for final examination)	Evidence shows plagiarism or other assessment offence of a minor nature in terms of volume with very little significance to the piece of work overall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FRDC Chair/Panel issues a formal written warning to the candidate copied to the DoS, advising that further offences will be deemed 'serious' and may result in a severe penalty being applied from the range described.</li> <li>• The offence is recorded on the candidate's student file/record until graduation.</li> <li>• Candidate and DoS must meet to agree an action plan as above</li> </ul>

		<p>which will be subject to FRDC scrutiny.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All examples must be rectified within the work concerned.</li> </ul>
<p><b>All other offences</b> including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First and serious offence;</li> <li>Second / subsequent offences;</li> <li><b>All</b> offences detected within the thesis after its submission for final examination, other than instances of poor scholarship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence shows plagiarism or other assessment offence that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is not extensive and is of relatively minor significance to the piece of work or thesis;</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>or</b></li> <li>Is extensive amounting to a considerable portion of the piece of work or thesis, or there are numerous occurrences throughout the work.</li> <li><b>or</b></li> <li>Is significant and compromises the academic integrity of piece of work or thesis as a whole;</li> <li><b>or</b></li> <li>The candidate has committed a second / subsequent offence, where previously found guilty of a first offence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affected material is redacted within the work and RDAB permits the assessment to go ahead.</li> <li><b>or</b></li> <li>Candidate is required to resubmit the work or thesis for assessment in a manner and within a timescale approved by RDAB, no further resubmission outcome permitted;</li> <li><b>or</b></li> <li>Candidate is required to withdraw by RDAB and their registration is terminated, no resubmission is permitted. The candidate will not qualify for the award on which they are registered;</li> <li>In all cases the offence will be recorded on the candidate's student file/record and included in future academic references.</li> </ul>

**PGR is required to withdraw, registration is terminated and no award is made**

**PGR15.11.7R** Where the offence committed is sufficiently serious the Board (RDAB) may require the PGR to withdraw. Their registration will be terminated and no award will be made. In the case of an offence in work submitted for final assessment this decision will override regulation PGR14.3.4R and the PGR candidate may be withdrawn without a viva voce examination.

## 9. Partnership students

This policy also applies to students studying at UK partner colleges and international partners.

### UK Partnership students

- The partner is responsible for reporting all alleged assessment offences to the relevant Faculty Assessment Offence Adviser at UWE.
- The partner has responsibility for investigating and providing evidence of an assessment offence to UWE.
- UWE has the final decision regarding the outcome of the investigation and will communicate the decision to the student.

### International partnership students

- The partner is responsible for reporting all alleged assessment offences to the Partnerships Team at UWE.
- The partnership agreement confirms that assessment offence identification and investigation is conducted by the relevant Module Leader and Assessment Offence Adviser at the partner location.
- UWE is informed of the outcome of the assessment offence investigation and the penalty recommended by the partner.
- The partner is responsible for notifying the student of the outcome.