

# Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy 2020-2021

## Summary Sheet

<b>Purpose of Policy and to whom it applies (please specify cohorts):</b>	
<p>The purpose of this policy is threefold:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To inform students of the expectations for and processes around academic integrity at the University of Northampton.</li> <li>2) To support academic staff in promoting academic integrity among learners on taught and research programmes across the University of Northampton.</li> <li>3) To outline, for other relevant stakeholders, the processes for promoting academic integrity across the University.</li> </ol> <p>This policy applies to all staff, students and other stakeholders who are involved in promoting academic integrity across the University of Northampton and at Partner institutions.</p>	
<b>Owner and Department:</b>	
Head of Learning and Teaching Development: Policy and Practice, Institute of Learning and Teaching	
<b>Principal contact:</b>	
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<b>Dissemination and implementation plan:</b>	
Once approved by SEC, will go to Senate for approval. Dissemination via Deputy Deans, Faculty Managers and Embedded Quality Officers. Storage on Tundra, linked to from main University website and included as part of the annual summary of policy updates also provided online and shared via UNify.	
<b>Date of initial committee approval (state committee name):</b>	SEC 10 June 2020
<b>Date of Senate approval:</b>	1 July 2020
<b>Date for implementation and cohorts to which it applies:</b>	August 2020 for all cohorts, including partner institutions.
<b>Proposed date of annual update:</b>	June/July 2021
<b>Date of last annual update:</b>	July 2019
<b>Proposed date of full review:</b>	June/July 2021
<b>Date of last full review:</b>	July 2019
<b>Version number and date:</b>	V1.1

# Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

## 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. The University of Northampton is committed to fostering a culture of academic integrity among staff and students as a way to promote academic standards and to enhance the student experience. To fulfil this commitment, the University takes a 'holistic approach' to promoting academic integrity: one that addresses the complexities around academic misconduct and that inspires good academic practice (cf. QAA, 2006; Academic Integrity Service, 2010).
- 1.2. In seeking to foster this culture of academic integrity, the University reserves the right to use any software tools it considers appropriate in order to investigate cases of suspected academic misconduct. Such processing is in line with all agreements between the University and our students and it is also in the University's legitimate interests to investigate activities that are contrary to good academic conduct.

## 2. Purpose and Scope

- 2.1. The purpose of the Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy is threefold:
  - 2.1.1. To inform students of the expectations and processes around academic integrity at the University of Northampton.
  - 2.1.2. To support all academic staff in promoting academic integrity among learners on taught and research programmes across the University.
  - 2.1.3. To outline, for other relevant staff and stakeholders, the processes for promoting academic integrity across the University.
- 2.2. The Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy establishes a minimum acceptable level of activity toward promoting learners' academic integrity and helps to ensure that students achieve [threshold academic standards](#).
- 2.3. Staff development opportunities and resources, such as *The Good Practice Handbook: Assessment, Feedback and Academic Integrity* are available to help staff explore particular relevant themes and practices and to share good practice with others.

## 3. Definitions

- 3.1. **Academic Integrity:** The Centre for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as: 'a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.' It is from these values that an academic community can flourish (CAI, 1999, p. 4).

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

- 3.2. Academic Misconduct:** Academic misconduct includes behaviour such as cheating, collusion, duplication, fabrication (Perry, 2010) or the commissioning of work (whether or not for financial reward). It also includes plagiarism, which is defined as 'passing off someone else's work, whether intentionally or unintentionally, as your own for your own benefit' (Carroll, 2002, p. 9). A full list of terms and their definitions is contained in Section 6.

It should be noted that termination of studies is a possible outcome of this process.

### 4. Key Principles

McCabe and Pavela (2015) identify a set of principles for promoting academic integrity among students, which have been adapted as part of the framework for this policy.

- 4.1.** Academic integrity is recognised and affirmed as a core institutional value.
- 4.2.** Academic staff guide and mentor students' academic progress.
- 4.3.** Students understand the potential of the Internet—and how that potential can be lost if online resources are used for fraud, theft and deception.
- 4.4.** Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their academic integrity.
- 4.5.** Expectations around academic integrity are clearly communicated to students on a regular basis.
- 4.6.** There are opportunities to design assessment in fair and creative ways (i.e. to be 'more personal and more relevant', p. 14).
- 4.7.** Academic staff and the institution reduce opportunities to engage in academic misconduct.
- 4.8.** Academic staff and the institution respond to academic misconduct when it occurs.
- 4.9.** All stakeholders help to define and support campus-wide academic integrity standards.

### 5. Use of Editorial and Proof-Reading Services

- 5.1.** Students who wish to obtain additional support in writing appropriate academic English are advised in the first place to seek additional support from either:

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

- the [Learning Development team](#), who can assist with all matters associated with academic writing. In line with their stated policy, this team will use examples of student work in order to teach students how to improve the linguistic aspects of written assignments.
  - the English language tutors who offer [English language tutorials and workshops](#), as well as an [online programme on NILE](#)<sup>1</sup>.
- 5.2.** Neither the Learning Development Team, nor the English language tutors offer a proof-reading service, as this is not an effective learning and teaching strategy.
- 5.3.** Students who seek external support with proof-reading their work should recognise the potential risks associated with this activity, including the wrong use of technical terms or distortion of the original meaning of the student work. Under no circumstances should students allow proof-readers to directly edit their work: proof-readers should indicate where changes or corrections etc. need to be made but not make those changes or corrections.
- 5.4.** Any use of external editorial or proof-reading services must not compromise a student's authorship of the submission as the University requires all submitted work to be that student's own work. The act of submitting work is considered by the University as a statement that the work submitted is a student's own and, as such, the student will be held responsible for the work submitted. The use of third-party services (whether paid for or not) will not be accepted in mitigation of any deficiencies identified in the work.
- 5.5.** Students' using third-party proof-reading services, must include a statement to this effect on the submitted work.
- 5.6.** Students who use third-party services for proof-reading and/or related services e.g. editorial advice and submit the work in which those third-party services have made direct editorial/textual changes to the work, are liable to be referred for academic misconduct<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The purpose of proof-reading is to ensure that the meaning is conveyed clearly and correctly in written English. Thus, proof-reading involves, for example, checking and correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar but not, for example, making editorial changes such as changes to structure or substantive content. It is not the responsibility of a proof-reader to check that the written English conveys the meaning intended by the writer: that would constitute editorial intervention.

<sup>2</sup> References to external and third-party support in sections 5.3-5.6 do not include supervisory support for the development of discipline-related writing skills as part of research degrees and taught-course dissertation/thesis and other principal modules. In addition, it is legitimate for a supervisor to correct substantive content, where expressed incorrectly, during the drafting stages of a dissertation or thesis. Students undertaking such types of writing are advised to discuss any proposed external third-party proof-reading or related support with their supervisors before proceeding.

# Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

## 6. Key Responsibilities

- 6.1. Processes around academic integrity and academic misconduct must conform to the University Assessment Regulations for the appropriate academic year and must reflect the principles of academic integrity outlined in Section 4 of this document.
- 6.2. Students must be given explicit guidance with regard to the current University Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy. This must be done at the programme- and module-level and must appear as part of the module information on the NILE sites within each programme. This guidance can be found on the [Academic Integrity](#) area of the ILT Website. Additional support from other online sources is also available (see Section 15).
- 6.3. If applicable, guidelines for professional standards (e.g. work placements), statements of ethical practice (e.g. dissertations) and/or professional codes of conduct (e.g. healthcare) in assessed work must be made explicit to students.
- 6.4. All students must be given guidance on academic misconduct prior to their first assignment in any module.
- 6.5. Each Faculty must appoint a minimum of six members of academic staff to serve as an Academic Integrity Officer (AIO) and at least one of these should have PGR experience and other specialisation in the investigation of contract-cheating.
- 6.6. Each Faculty must ensure that the appointed AIOs are equipped to be highly effective in their roles by ensuring AIOs:
  - engage in an appropriate level of staff development;
  - receive an appropriate amount of time and other resource for the role; and
  - have opportunities to engage in continuing development opportunities around supporting academic integrity.
- 6.7. Suspected cases of academic misconduct must be treated according to the Suspected Academic Misconduct Procedures that follow. Where the student is undertaking a Postgraduate Research degree, the process detailed in Appendix 1 will apply instead.

## 7. Stage 1: Faculty-based Academic Integrity Officer (AIO) makes a decision based on evidence, or escalates the suspected case directly to an Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP)

N.B. The following process is visualised in Appendix 3.

- 7.1. **Initial Referral Process for all Misconduct, except Contract Cheating, Commissioning, Ghost Writing or associated cases**

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

- 7.1.1. On identifying a case of suspected academic misconduct, the marking tutor should apply a ZZ grade to the item of assessment in NILE. No grade should be provided in Turnitin. The tutor must copy and paste the text in the box below into the relevant feedback area in NILE.

**Standard text for including in NILE** is as follows:

This assessment has been referred to an Academic Integrity Officer for further investigation on the basis of suspected academic misconduct. The marking of your work will be delayed until this process has been completed. You will receive an email shortly with further information about the nature of this referral and a link to information on what you need to do next. For more details, please see the Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy.

- 7.1.2. The tutor completes the current [online Academic Misconduct Referral Form](#) and submits it to the relevant Student Records Team (SRT).
- 7.1.3. The referral should normally occur at the same time as the tutor releases the grades and feedback for the assignment to the rest of the cohort (i.e. within 4 working weeks of the of the assignment due date). If submitted after this date, the AIO has the right to dismiss the case without further investigation.
- 7.1.4. The referring tutor must provide all relevant evidence to support the referral – including original sources for comparison purposes, where appropriate. The referral should also contain firm conclusions about the allegation and the manner by which these have been reached (e.g. viva voce, text matching report, observation, previous academic work or similar, metadata or other linguistic/stylistics analysis). The AIO decision will normally be based on the evidence provided by the referring tutor – there is no general expectation for AIOs to find the relevant evidence for themselves.

The tutor should also indicate whether the submission would pass if there were no suspicion of misconduct. This does not require full marking of the submission but ensures that any penalty applied by the AIO is not higher than the paper would be worth academically, before the misconduct is take into consideration.

- 7.1.5. In the case of suspected misconduct during an examination, the invigilator will complete the current examination 'Disturbance Form'. This form is then passed to the relevant Module Tutor who will then make a standard academic misconduct referral in line with this policy. The invigilator's report will form part of the evidence considered by the AIO in determining an outcome for the case.

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

- 7.1.6. Tutors should provide examples of work for all students involved in a suspected case of collusion.
- 7.1.7. Where it is suspected that the alleged misconduct involves another student registered at UoN, either the initial referring tutor or the AIO may refer and investigate that other student under the provisions of this policy.
- 7.1.8. It is appropriate for concurrent referrals (i.e. those made within a few days of each other, but for different assessments) to be dealt with as one referral by the same AIO. In determining whether multiple referrals should be considered together, regard is to be had to whether the student has had opportunity to learn from earlier referrals i.e. whether an outcome in the previous case(s) has been received.
- 7.1.9. On receiving a referral, the Student Records Team will record all relevant details in the Academic Misconduct Log and pass the referral to an AIO within the same Faculty, in line with agreed Faculty processes for allocating cases.
- 7.1.10. Upon receipt of the referral and associated evidence, the AIO will review the evidence to see if there is sufficient evidence to support the allegation.
- 7.1.11. If there is insufficient evidence, the AIO can return the case to the tutor via Student Records and request additional evidence. If additional evidence is not received within 5 working days from when the case is returned to Student Records, the case can be dismissed due to lack of evidence.
- 7.1.12. Where the AIO considers that there is sufficient evidence available to support the allegation, s/he will provide details of the interview arrangements to the relevant Student Records team who will invite the student to attend the interview and ensure that the student has access to the evidence and understands the basis for the referral. The student will have an opportunity to discuss and respond to the evidence.

The student will be given advance notice (normally a minimum of five working days from date on email/letter) and will be notified of the right to bring a friend or relative for support (see Appendix 2). All communications will typically be by email, using the email address provided by the student to the University.

Responsibility for ensuring that the University has an accurate email address for the student, sits with the student.

If the student is unable to attend the interview s/he can provide a written submission in response to the referral and associated evidence. Normally, this interview will take place in person although it is accepted that this may not always be logistically possible (e.g.

# Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

for students at partner institutions). In these cases, appropriate webinar technology may be used instead.

[Guidance for students in how to prepare for this interview is available online.](#)

## 7.2. The Stage 1a AIO Interview

- 7.2.1. The AIO may be accompanied by another member of staff at the interview with the student, if this is appropriate and if the student is advised accordingly.
- 7.2.2. Students are expected to bring all relevant evidence to support their authorship of the assessment in question with them to the interview.
- 7.2.3. If the event of non-attendance by the student, the AIO can make a decision on the evidence presented.
- 7.2.4. In determining the validity of the allegation, the AIO will exercise a judgment on the balance of probability (see definitions in Section 13). Extenuating circumstances will not be considered in determining culpability but may be considered in determining the penalty imposed.
- 7.2.5. Following the interview, the AIO will make a decision on the basis of all the evidence provided, included that provided by the student during the interview. The AIO can reach one of the following outcomes:
  - there is no validity to the allegation;
  - a minor offence has taken place and an assignment-level penalty will be applied by the AIO in accordance with the university tariff for minor cases;
  - the case should be referred to Stage 2, because it is either a serious offence, or a second or subsequent minor offence but where there is a record of previous academic misconduct, or the case has complicating factors; or
  - the case must be referred to Stage 2 because of suspected contract-cheating or commissioning undetected by the referring tutor.
- 7.2.6. Once the AIO has reached a decision based on the evidence provided, s/he must contact Student Records to obtain details of any previous misconduct and associated penalties. This information should not be made available to the AIO before this point in the proceedings. There is an expectation that the penalty for second and subsequent findings of misconduct will increase, unless there is a clear reason not to do so.

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

- 7.2.7. Having made a decision, the AIO will pass the outcome to the Student Records Team, who will log the outcome, communicate with the student (via email) and place the paperwork (referral form and evidence) on the student's file. A copy of the outcome email should be sent to the referring tutor who will update NILE with the final grade awarded.
- 7.2.8. If the decision from the AIO is that there is no validity to the allegation, then the student work is returned to the referring tutor to be marked on the basis of the academic worth of the submission.
- 7.2.9. This stage of the process should normally be completed and the outcome letter sent to the student within 4 working weeks of the Academic Integrity Officer receiving the referral. Exceptions may include:
- complex and complicated cases which will take longer to investigate
  - referrals made during university vacation periods due to the likelihood of key academic staff having annual leave

### 7.3. Stage 1b: Appeal from the Stage 1a AIO Decision

- 7.3.1. Students are permitted to appeal the AIO decision from a Stage 1a Interview. Appeals will only be considered if they are made using the [Academic Misconduct Appeal Form](#) and submitted to the Academic Registrar (or nominated deputy) within five working days of the AIO outcome.
- 7.3.2. There are only 2 possible grounds for appeal:
- (a) the decision arrived at by the AIO is wrong in fact (i.e. academic misconduct has not occurred); or
  - (b) the requirements of the Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy have not been followed.

In both cases, students choosing to appeal the AIO decision must provide evidence to support the appeal. This evidence must be provided at the same time as the appeal is submitted. Appellants will not be permitted to introduce new evidence during any appeal hearing.

- 7.3.3. Appeals will be considered by the Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals Team to determine if the appeal criteria have been met.

Appeals can be rejected if they do not meet either of the grounds listed in section 7.3.2. In these cases, the University will clearly indicate the basis for the refusal of the appeal. The student will be provided with a Completion of Procedures email.

- 7.3.4. If a student has an outstanding resit opportunity, this should be taken regardless of any decision to appeal the AIO decision. The

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

consequences of not completing the resit should be made clear to the student. Students are normally entitled to 4 working weeks between receiving an academic misconduct outcome from the AIO (including a referral to Panel) and the submission date for the resit assessment to allow sufficient time to complete the assessment and obtain academic skills support. Provision of feedback and standard resit dates for other members of the student cohort are unaffected by this clause.

Where a formal warning has been given, students are normally entitled to 4 working weeks between receiving the grade for the marked work and the submission date for the resit assessment to allow sufficient time to complete the assessment and obtain academic skills support.

7.3.5. Appeals against an AIO decision will be heard by a panel of senior AIOs. In reviewing the Stage 1 AIO's decision, the AIO Panel has the authority to increase or decrease the penalty.

7.3.6. The Stage 1b AIO Panel will comprise 2 senior AIOs, one of whom will be the nominated chair. If necessary, a third AIO can be asked to participate. This will typically be in cases where the first 2 AIOs cannot reach an agreement.

7.3.7. The panel will normally meet virtually, with the ability to hold a face-to-face hearing if required. Students will not normally have the right to attend these hearings.

7.3.8. The expectation is that these cases will be determined within a week of the panel receiving the documentation from the Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals Team.

### **7.4. Initial Referral Process for Contract Cheating, Commissioning, Ghost Writing and associated cases<sup>3</sup>**

N.B. The following process is visualised in Appendix 4.

7.4.1. The University of Northampton recognises that there is a qualitative difference in misconduct cases that involve contract cheating, commissioning, ghost writing or the facilitation of any of these types of misconduct based on the deliberate intent to deceive. Decisions on such referrals will automatically be considered by a Stage 2 Academic Misconduct Panel.

7.4.2. The University has identified a number of [AIOs in each Faculty with particular expertise in investigating contract cheating and commissioning cases](#). The complexities involved in investigating these cases makes it appropriate for these AIOs to support referring

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<sup>3</sup> The terms 'contract cheating,' 'commissioning' or 'commissioned' will be used to refer to any cases of suspected contract cheating, commissioning, ghost writing or the facilitation of any of these types of misconduct. More precise definitions can be found in the glossary (section 13).

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

tutors in collating evidence to support a referral, including with the use of any additional, specialist software that the University has access to.

7.4.3. Indications that an assignment may have been subject to contract cheating or commissioning include, but are not limited to the following:

- Changes in writing style throughout the assignment;
- Inconsistent student 'voice' in comparison to previous work or other available evidence from the student;
- Document owned by someone other than the student (not conclusive in and of itself);
- Essay-mill/ghost-writer 'tell-tales' such as order reference/number in filename or on title-page, essay-mill name or writer ID number appearing as author, place-holders with comments such as 'put your name here', 'put essay title here', 'check that I have the correct hospital name' etc.;
- Resources listed but not cited or cited, but not listed;
- References to published work that are incorrect i.e. the published work does not actually say what the assignment attributes to it;
- An anomalously low originality/similarity score (e.g. a score of zero, or close to, with bibliography excluded).

Staff Development for tutors and AIOs wishing to learn more about what these indications that an assignment has been written by someone other than the submitting student is available via C@N-DO.

7.4.4. On identifying a case of suspected academic misconduct, the marking tutor should apply a ZZ grade to the item of assessment in NILE. No grade should be provided in Turnitin. The tutor must copy and paste the relevant text in section 7.1.1 (above) into the feedback area in NILE.

7.4.5. Before completing the [online referral form](#), the tutor should consult one of the identified AIOs with expertise in contract cheating/commissioning cases. The tutor and the AIO should work together to discuss, collate and review any evidence to support a referral. This can include use of specialist software by a licensed AIO to help identify whether a referral for contract cheating/commissioning is justified.

7.4.6. At an appropriate time, but before an official referral is made, the tutor can invite the student for a viva. The purpose of this viva is to gather evidence to help determine whether a full investigation potentially leading to a referral to an Academic Misconduct Panel under this policy is appropriate. This may include asking the student to comment on any indications emerging from a software analysis of the student's work.

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

This viva should take place synchronously i.e. face-to-face or via real-time technology where the student is visible to the tutor (e.g. webinar). Text chat vivas are not considered appropriate due to the potential for lag in responses, even if ostensibly presented as 'live chat'.

Guidance for students in how to prepare for this viva is [available online](#).

7.4.7. This section details the process that must be followed when holding a section 7.4.6 viva:

7.4.7.1. The referring tutor<sup>4</sup> will invite the student to attend a viva which must be held as soon as possible after the issue has been identified, ideally within the 4 working-week marking period.

7.4.7.2. The invitation to the student must contain the following information:

(a) the nature of the allegation, including the specific nature of the suspected misconduct; and

(b) guidance on how to prepare for the viva.

If this information is not provided, the student is entitled to request this information from the referring tutor.

7.4.7.3. The student must be given a minimum of 3 working days in which to prepare for the viva from when all aspects of sections 7.4.7.1 and 7.4.7.2 are met.

7.4.7.4. The viva will be undertaken by the referring tutor with the student present. The student is not entitled to bring anyone else along to the viva.

7.4.7.5. The student is expected to bring supporting evidence to the viva. This can include, but is not limited to: assignment drafts, research notes, work in progress from start to finish.

7.4.7.6. The viva will review the student submission against the following pre-set criteria that will be circulated to the student as part of the invitation to attend the viva:

- a) Can the student provide a credible explanation for any apparent essay-mill/ghost-writer tell-tales present in their assignment?
- b) Can the student talk to the content?
- c) Can the student remember the essence of the argument?

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<sup>4</sup> This process will be managed by the referring tutor and not by Student Records as until the tutor determines that there is a case to answer, no 'official' record will be created.

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

- d) Can the student show how the argument develops?
- e) Can the student discuss the work and the resources cited?
- f) Can the student demonstrate that they authored the work? (e.g. by making requested changes - useful for computer coding or other practical assignments, or through production of draft work)

7.4.8. If the tutor and the AIO determine that there are sufficient grounds for an academic misconduct referral on the basis of suspected contract cheating/commissioning etc, the evidence generated as part of the viva will become part of the evidence base to be submitted to Student Records for consideration by the AMP. The tutor remains responsible for completion of the referral form.

Relevant evidence to support the referral includes, but is not limited to:

- a) The original student submission allowing access to the document metadata together with a screenshot of the metadata (but not a screenshot in isolation)
- b) The accompanying Turnitin report with tutor annotations showing where the issues lie
- c) Any report generated by any specialist contract cheating/commissioning software.
- d) Examples of other work by the same student (if available, to show their level of academic English or work that shows the 'known student voice')

7.4.9. If there is no referral, the student submission is marked on the basis of academic worth only (i.e. marked on academic merits). The viva cannot be used to determine the mark awarded.

7.4.10. The referral form is processed by Student Records, who allocate it to the same AIO as supported the referring tutor in the pre-referral phase. At this point, the AIO undertakes a thorough investigation as appropriate, to support the referral and to gather additional evidence. If specialist contract-cheating software has not been used already, it should be used at this point.

7.4.11. Once the investigation has been completed, the case is passed to the Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals Team to convene a Stage 2 Panel hearing.

### **8. Stage 2: AMP to adjudicate a case that has been escalated to the AIO due to the nature of the suspected offence**

- 8.1.** All cases referred to Stage 2 will be triaged by the Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals Team to ensure the referral warrants a Stage 2 hearing.
- 8.2.** Cases that are not considered to warrant a Stage 2 hearing (i.e. where the evidence is insufficient for imposition of a module level penalty or

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

termination of studies) or where penalties are still available at assignment (as opposed to module) level, will be returned to the original AIO to determine an outcome in line with Stage 1 or to provide further evidence to warrant a Stage 2 hearing.

**8.3.** Cases that are heard by an Academic Misconduct Panel, will comprise:

- (a) an experienced AIO as Chair;
- (b) at least two other AIOs who have had no previous involvement with the cases examined and are not involved with the student's programme of study;
- (c) an Officer appointed by the Academic Registrar

**8.4.** In all cases, the Officer to the Panel or the Panel Chair reserve(s) the right to call or contact the Stage 1 AIO (or nominee) to the Stage 2 Panel hearing to present the case and any associated evidence or provide any necessary clarification.

**8.5.** In all cases, the student will be invited to attend the panel hearing. The student will be given advance notice, will be provided with the documentation that the panel will consider and will be entitled to bring a friend or relative for support. Legal representation is not permitted (see further Appendix 2).

If the student cannot attend the hearing then s/he is entitled to make a written submission outlining their position.

**8.6.** After hearing the case and considering all the evidence, the panel will decide that:

- there is no validity to the allegation; or
- a minor offence has taken place and a penalty will be applied in accordance with the university tariff for minor cases; or
- serious academic misconduct has occurred.

**8.7.** Where serious academic misconduct has occurred, the panel must determine the penalty in accordance with the university tariff for serious offences. The panel may, at this stage, take account of any previous offences. In line with section 7.2.6, there is an expectation that the penalty applied will be an increase on any previous penalties, unless there is a clear reason for this not to be the case.

**8.8.** It is expected that findings of contract-cheating or commissioning will normally result in the application of a module level penalty or termination of study. Lesser penalties should only be applied in exceptional circumstances, and only for a first academic misconduct referral.

**8.9.** In determining the validity of the allegation, the panel will exercise a judgment on the balance of probability. Extenuating circumstances will

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

not be considered in determining culpability but may be considered in determining the penalty imposed.

- 8.10.** If the panel determines that programme termination should be applied, it must make a suitable recommendation for consideration by the Academic Registrar (or nominee).
  - 8.11.** The Officer (or nominee) will advise the student of the panel's decision in writing within five working days. This email should also be forwarded to the referring tutor who is required to update NILE with the final grade outcome.
  - 8.12.** If the AMP hearing is held to consider an appeal against a AIO decision, there is no internal appeal against the decision of the Academic Misconduct Panel: the panel's decision marks the end of the University's process in relation to Academic Misconduct.
  - 8.13.** The written outcome will include a 'Completion of Procedure' letter (sent via email), which details the appellant's right to apply for a review to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.
- 9. Stage 3: Appealing an AMP's decision (This stage is only available when the original case was escalated to the AMP by the AIO, rather than dealt with by the AIO in the first instance.)**
- 9.1.** If the AMP hearing is held because of a direct referral by an AIO (i.e. the AIO considers that a serious offence has occurred, the case has complicating factors, or the referral was for contract cheating, commissioning or associated cases) then an appeal against an outcome may be made to the Academic Registrar (or nominee). This appeal must be made using the [Academic Misconduct Appeal Form](#) and must be received within five working days of the notification of the AMP outcome.
  - 9.2.** Students choosing to appeal the AIO decision must provide evidence to support the appeal. This evidence must be provided at the same time as the appeal is submitted. Appellants will not be permitted to introduce new evidence during any appeal hearing.
  - 9.3.** The Academic Registrar (or nominee) will determine whether the appeal presents credible grounds for the case to be reopened based on the criteria in section 7.3.1.
  - 9.4.** If, in the opinion of the Academic Registrar (or nominee) the appeal has no merit, then the outcome will be confirmed as in section 7.3.3. (above).
  - 9.5.** Where an appeal includes credible evidence which the Academic Registrar determines should be reconsidered, the case will be returned for consideration by the next AMP hearing and the full Stage 2 process

# Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

(above) will be repeated.

- 9.6.** Where an AMP is reviewing a decision made by a previous panel, the second panel has the authority to increase or decrease the penalty previously imposed.

## 10. Tariff

- 10.1.** Table 1 shows the possible penalties for Academic Misconduct and by whom these penalties can be applied. Any of these penalties can be applied as this is not a cumulative scale; however there is an expectation that the penalty will increase in severity for subsequent acts of misconduct. Ultimately, the decision as to the severity of the penalty is the responsibility of the University to determine.

**Table 1: Tariff for Academic Misconduct**

	<b>Penalties</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>
Penalty at assignment level:	Formal warning <sup>5</sup>	AIO
	Grade for assignment reduced to bare pass	AIO
	Grade for assignment reduced to fail (AG).	AIO
Penalty at module level:	Final written warning <sup>6</sup>	AMP
	Grade for assignment reduced to fail (AG). Resit rights removed.	AMP
	Grade for module reduced to AG.	AMP
	Grade for module reduced to AG <sup>7</sup> repeat module grade capped at bare pass	AMP
	Grade for module reduced to AG <sup>7</sup> . Right to repeat module withdrawn.	AMP
	Grade for module reduced to AG <sup>7</sup> . Right to repeat equivalent credits withdrawn.	AMP
	Termination of studies	AMP

- 10.2.** When determining the appropriate penalty for the misconduct, the following factors should be taken into account:

<sup>5</sup> This penalty will normally be reserved for a first referral where there is evidence of more than unintentional poor scholarship but not enough for a capped bare-pass or harsher penalty.

<sup>6</sup> See further, sections 10.4 to 10.5.

<sup>7</sup> AG stands for a G grade awarded on the basis of academic misconduct.

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

- extent and seriousness of the misconduct
- stage of student study (e.g. term 1, year 1 as compared to final year dissertation)
- is it poor academic practice or intentional misconduct?
- a student's previous history of misconduct
- is it a concurrent referral with no time for the student to have benefited from developmental opportunities
- the credit rating of the work

This is not a definitive list. The precise penalty will be determined based on all the circumstances of the case.

**10.3.** However, in the light of sections 7.2.6 and 8.9, second and subsequent penalties will normally increase in severity unless there is a clear and justifiable reason for this not to be the case.

**10.4.** The Final Written Warning (section 10.5) should be included in any Outcome letter to any of the penalties awarded by the AMP in line with the tariff (Table 1). This includes:

10.4.1. Cases where a student has had multiple previous findings of academic misconduct and has had time to engage with additional support e.g. from Learning Development, but where there is no evidence of improvement to their academic practice.

10.4.2. Cases where a student has been referred for ghost-writing or otherwise facilitating academic misconduct but has not actually submitted any work for summative credit. In these cases, the warning will be given in isolation from any other penalty.

10.4.3. All cases where a student is found to have engaged in contract-cheating/commissioning, irrespective of penalty.

**10.5.** The final written warning will state that 'Any further findings of academic misconduct, for any reason, are liable to result in termination of studies.'

## 11. Records

**11.1.** A copy of the records of all academic misconduct cases will be placed on the relevant student file. Where a case is dismissed, all documentation will be removed and shredded.

**11.2.** The University will hold an electronic record of all allegations of academic misconduct. These data will inform the review processes.

## 12. Academic Misconduct and Assessment Boards

**12.1.** Except for noting the outcomes of this policy and procedure, Assessment Boards shall take no account of allegations of academic misconduct. The Boards will apply any penalty determined through

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

this procedure. The Boards have no authority to vary the penalty<sup>8</sup>.

- 12.2. Where the penalty allows resubmission or reassessment, the work required will to be determined by the Board in the usual way.
- 12.3. Assessment Boards will be notified of every case where a decision on an academic misconduct allegation is pending and will not confirm an outcome for the relevant assessment until the decision is known. The element of assessment will be clearly identified and a 'deferred decision' will be recorded.

### 13. Glossary

Please note: Additional definitions and examples of each of the following can be accessed through a standard online search.

- 13.1. **Balance of Probabilities:** This means that on the weight of the evidence presented, the student was more likely than not, to have committed academic misconduct.
- 13.2. **Cheating** refers to the obtaining, attempt to obtain or the provision of assistance to another to obtain credit for academic work by dishonesty or deception. It includes, but is not limited to, attempts to improve evaluation of performance. It may also include: lying, copying the work of a peer, discussion about a question or answer during a test or examination, accessing notes, 'cheat sheets' or other information devices prohibited by the test or examination conditions.
- 13.3. **Collusion** is 'the act of collaborating with someone else on an assessment exercise which is intended to be wholly your own work, or the act of assisting someone else to commit plagiarism' (Maguire, 2003). It should be noted that this can occur in both face-to-face and online contexts. Also, see the definition of 'facilitation' below.
- 13.4. **Contract-cheating** is where a student contracts out their academic assessment to writers (sometimes called 'ghost writers') and purchases back the finished work in order to submit it as their own, in whole or in part, as an item of assessment. Transactions typically occur over the internet. This is often known as 'commissioning'. Sometimes this occurs without any payment, actual or in-kind.
- 13.5. **Commissioning** – see definition of contract-cheating above. However, commissioning does not necessarily involve a 'contract', a recorded transaction or either a financial or non-financial reward.
- 13.6. **Duplication** refers to the submission of the same material more than once for the purposes of obtaining academic credit. While not strictly

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that this requirement does **not** over-ride Academic regulation 3.7.8. In other words, a student whose assessment grade is adjusted as a result of an academic integrity process will still be entitled to be awarded the higher grade for that assessment component where this is relevant.

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

amounting to plagiarism (see definition below) it is still considered as serious academic misconduct.

**13.7. Extenuating Circumstances** are circumstances that pertain to the timeframe for the preparation and submission of the referred assignment (for more information, refer to the [Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#)).

Appropriate independent documented evidence must be provided, along with an explanation of why the matter was not raised earlier under the Mitigating Circumstances Policy. If the same grounds were submitted in an application for Mitigating Circumstances then these will not normally be eligible for consideration under this policy.

**13.8. Fabrication** refers specifically to the falsification of data, information or citations in an academic exercise, typically an assessment. This includes false excuses for missing deadlines, false claims to have submitted work and the falsification of agreed ethical requirements. It may be specifically referred to as falsification.

**13.9. Facilitation** is defined as one student taking any action to enable or assist another student to commit academic misconduct. It is a form of collusion and can include, for example, commissioning a ghost-writer on behalf of another student or acting as an agent or intermediary for a ghost-writer or essay-mill. Facilitation can be undertaken as a favour and doesn't necessarily have to be for money or other reward.

**13.10. Ghost-writing** is defined as one student undertaking any assessment activity on behalf of another student. This can include, for example, writing all or part of an assignment, analysis of results, lab or field work, practical or placement elements. The work doesn't necessarily have to be undertaken for money or other reward.

**13.11. Plagiarism** refers to the passing off of another's ideas of work as one's own, without acknowledging and appropriately referencing the true source.

**13.12. Replication** is the same as duplication – the resubmission of the whole or parts of a previously-submitted piece of work in order to obtain academic credit a second time for the same piece of work.

**13.13. Self-plagiarism** is a term sometimes used to indicate duplication or replication. It is possible to self-plagiarise when you submit the work that has already been submitted for academic credit in one module, for academic credit in another module, even when a module is being repeated.

**13.14. Vassalage** refers to a situation where a student commits academic misconduct in whole or in part out of a sense of misplaced loyalty to another individual, mis-perceived familial / social / cultural / religious obligation to another organisation or body etc. This refers to circumstances where there are demonstrable deep-seated patterns of

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

behaviour, not simply 'They told me to...'. This does not affect outcome but can mitigate penalty.

### 14. Links to related UoN Policies, Guidance and Regulations

[Assessment & Feedback Portal](#)

[Academic Integrity Web Area](#)

[University of Northampton Skills Hub](#)

[UNPAC 2017 \(University of Northampton Plagiarism Avoidance Course 2017\)](#)  
– a student self-study module

[Academic Misconduct Referral Form](#)

[Academic Misconduct Appeal Form](#)

[Guidance to students on how to prepare for an academic misconduct interview, appeal or viva](#)

### 15. Links and references to related external documents

Academic Integrity Service (2010). Supporting academic integrity: Approaches and resources for higher education. York: HEA. Available online at:

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/academicintegrity/SupportingAcademicIntegrity\\_v2.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/academicintegrity/SupportingAcademicIntegrity_v2.pdf) [accessed on 14/05/14].

Carroll, J. (2002). A Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.

Center for Academic Integrity (1999). The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity. Des Plaines: CAI. Available online at:

<http://www.academicintegrity.org/icaai/assets/FVProject.pdf> [accessed on 17/05/14].

Maguire C (2003) *Guidance for BVC providers: a common approach to plagiarism and collusion*. London: Bar Council.

McCabe, D. L. and Pavela, G. (2015) Ten Principles of Academic Integrity for Faculty [online]. Available from: [http://www.integrityseminar.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Ten-Principles-of-Academic-Integrity-for-Faculty\\_0.pdf](http://www.integrityseminar.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Ten-Principles-of-Academic-Integrity-for-Faculty_0.pdf) [Accessed 08/06/15].

Perry, B. (2010). Exploring academic misconduct: Some insights into student behaviour. *Active Learning in Higher Education*. 11(2), 97-108.

QAA (2006). Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 6: Assessment of students. Gloucester: QAA.

# Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

## Appendix 1

### Academic Misconduct Process for Postgraduate Research Students

#### 1. Guidance on referring suspected cases of academic misconduct

In relation to a postgraduate research student undertaking a PhD or MPhil, or Professional Research thesis, suspected academic misconduct may be referred:

- i) by the supervisory team;
  - When a student's skills in relation to academic integrity do not develop appropriately, and/or the student does not take appropriate action to remedy previous instances of academic misconduct,
  - When misconduct is suspected in a piece of work or a report specifically requested by a supervisor or sponsor,
  - When misconduct is suspected in the documents submitted for assessment at the registration or transfer stages;
- ii) by the Research Degrees Board when misconduct is suspected in the documents submitted for assessment at the registration or transfer stages; or
- iii) by examiners when examining the thesis submitted for examination.

#### 2. Suspected Academic Misconduct Procedure – Stage 1

**2.1** Upon suspecting academic misconduct in relation to a postgraduate research student undertaking a PhD or MPhil, or Professional Research thesis:

- i) a **supervisor** must provide clear, written feedback to the student explaining why the matter has been referred and informing the student that an email will be sent to them in due course outlining what will happen next. The supervisor refers the matter to the appropriate Academic Integrity Officer (AIO) by completing the Academic Misconduct Referral Form and submitting it to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will log the referral and pass it to the AIO;
- ii) a **Research Degrees Board (RDB) member** must first consult the RDB chair who may consult other members and/or the supervisory team in order to decide whether to refer the case. In the case of a referral, the Chair or a nominated member shall provide clear, written feedback to the student explaining why the matter has been referred and informing them that an email will be sent to them in due course outlining what will happen next. The RDB Chair or nominee refers the matter to the appropriate Academic Integrity Officer (AIO) by completing the Academic Misconduct Referral Form and submitting it to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will log the referral and pass it to the AIO;

## Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

- iii) an **examiner** must provide clear, written feedback to the Graduate School explaining why the matter should be referred to an Academic Integrity Officer (AIO). The Graduate School must inform the student of the referral and the reasons for it in an email, also outlining what will happen next. The examiner refers the matter to the appropriate Academic Integrity Officer (AIO) by completing the Academic Misconduct Referral Form and submitting it to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will make the other examiner(s) aware of the referral and the examination process may not continue until the outcome of the referral is known. The Graduate School will log the referral and pass it to the AIO.

**2.2** Suspected academic misconduct in relation to facilitated Level 8 modules shall follow the same procedure as for taught modules.

**2.3** Where, in the Academic Misconduct Procedure in the main policy document, it refers to the Student Records team, for Postgraduate Research Students the Graduate School shall act as the Student Records team. For facilitated Level 8 modules, the Graduate School shall communicate with the Student Records team responsible for assessment administration.

**2.4** If, at Stage 2 of the Procedure, the panel determines that programme termination should be applied, it is the Research Degrees Committee to which it should make a recommendation rather than the Academic Registrar as stated in section 5.7.35.

### 3. Tariff

In addition to Table 2 in the Procedure, the following table shows the possible penalties for Academic Misconduct in relation to a postgraduate research student undertaking a PhD or MPhil or Professional Research thesis and by whom these penalties can be applied.

	<b>Penalties</b>	<b>Decision maker</b>
Postgraduate research – prior to thesis submission	Allowed to continue/progress and require remedy of misconduct as part of supervisory process	AIO
	If at APG or transfer, remedy misconduct before registration or transfer application can be submitted to the RDB	AMP
	Termination of studies	AMP
Postgraduate research – post-thesis submission	Hold viva and include remedy of misconduct as part of post-viva amendments	AMP
	Remedy misconduct before proceeding to viva	AMP
	Hold viva and refer thesis including remedy of misconduct	AMP
	Refer thesis without viva. Remedied thesis to go to viva as resubmission (i.e. no further attempt allowed)	AMP
	Termination of studies	AMP

# Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

## Appendix 2 Guidance on accompanying 'friend'

The University of Northampton recognises that providing support and advice to persons as part of this Policy should extend to enabling them to be accompanied at any formal meeting or hearing.

### ***Legal Representation***

Because the proceedings of appeal and complaint hearings are part of University's internal arrangements, formal legal representation is not normally either helpful or appropriate: legal representation is therefore likely to be the exception, rather than the norm. A complainant or appellant who intends to be accompanied at a meeting or hearing by a legal representative, or another person acting in a professional capacity, must contact the University to request this at least 5 working days prior to the hearing and set out the reasons for making this request. Any such request will be considered by the Academic Registrar (or nominee) and a decision made. The decision, and reasons for it, will be relayed to the student. Where a legal representative is to be present the University may consider whether to include its own legal representation. In such circumstances it may become necessary to postpone the meeting to a later date.

### ***Role of the 'Friend'***

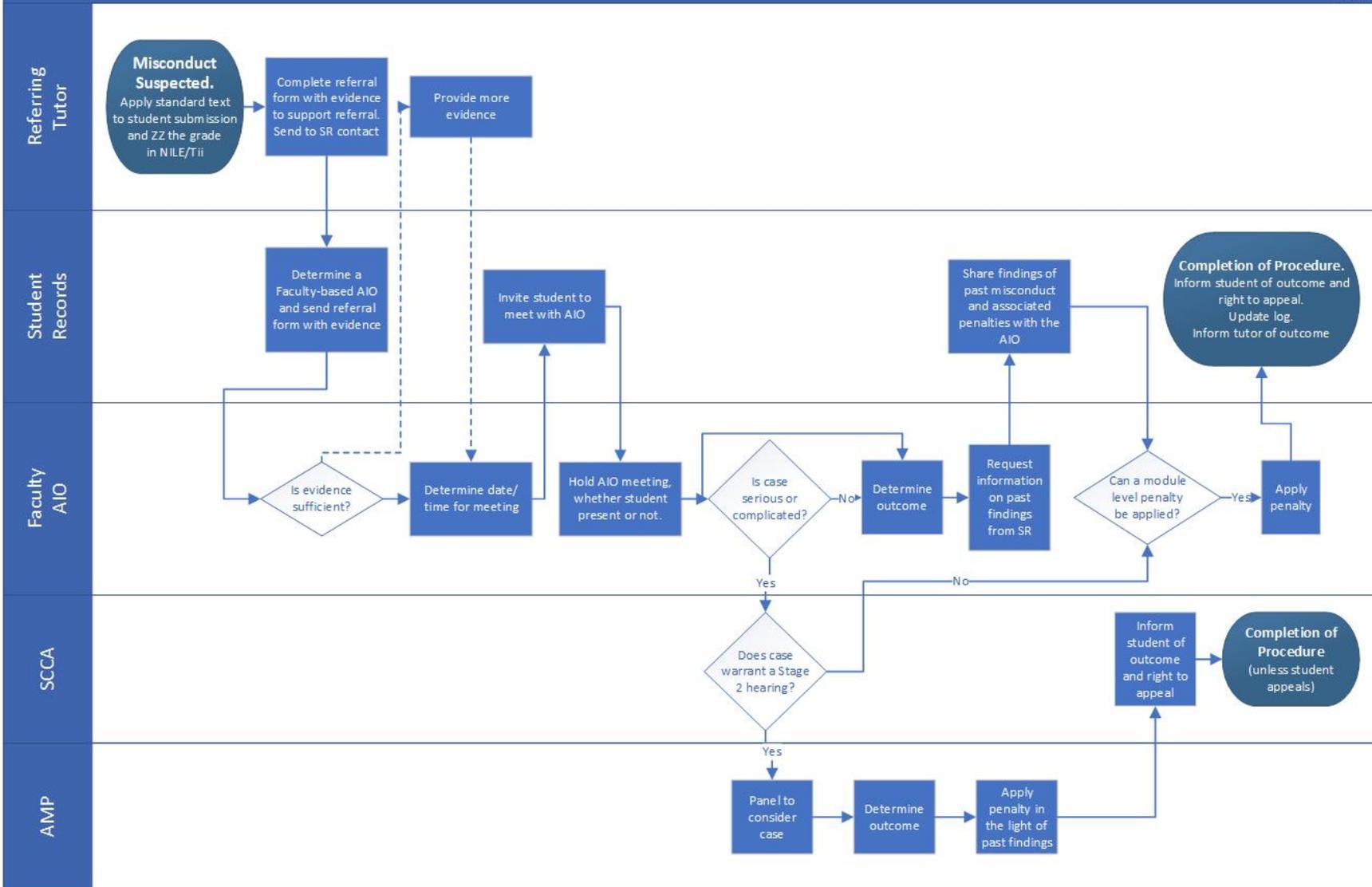
The University normally restricts the role of friend to that of support and advice. The friend will not normally be allowed to present the student's case on his/her behalf, nor respond directly to questions. At the discretion of the investigator or the Chair of the Hearing, the friend may present a brief supporting statement. Where a student wishes his/her friend to take a more active role this should be requested to the Chair of the Hearing in advance (with reasons). The Chair will decide whether or not to accept the request.

The appellant or complainant has the right to confer with their friend during the course of the hearing or meeting, for example, before responding to any question from the panel or the investigator.

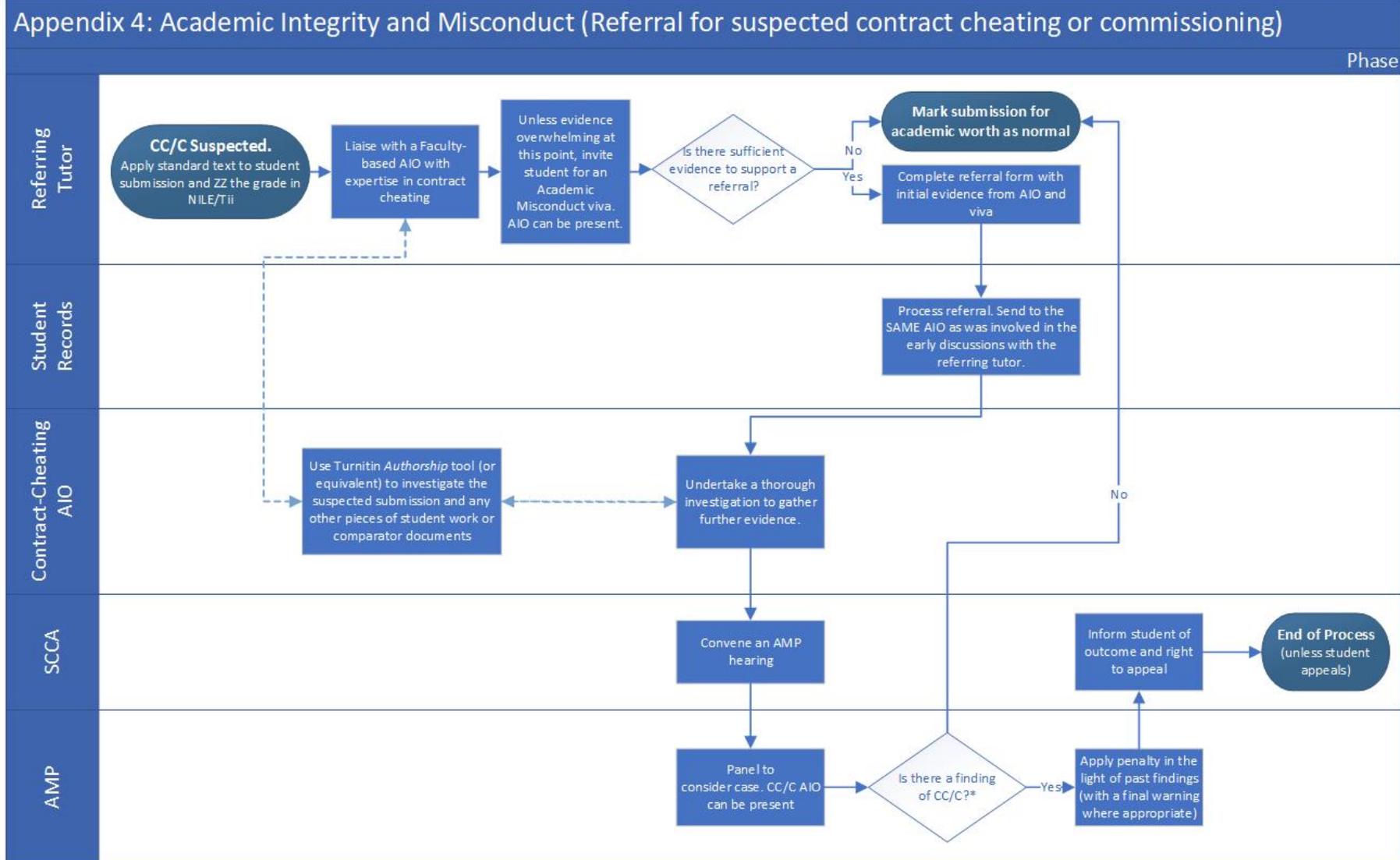
The appellant or complainant may not be represented in their absence by a third party: in such cases the panel will normally consider the case in their absence. Where, through reasons of disability, the appellant or complainant is unable to represent themselves, appropriate adjustments will be made and these arrangements will be subject to approval by the Academic Registrar.

# Appendix 3: Academic Integrity and Misconduct (Standard Referral)

Phase



# Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy



\* If the Panel determine that misconduct has occurred, but that it is not contract-cheating or commissioning specifically, they can apply any of the available penalties from the tariff in the Academic Integrity Policy.