



Academic Offences Policy and Procedure for Pearson Higher Nationals

2025-26



Senior Leadership Responsibility	Deputy Chief Executive - Curriculum and Quality- Adam Fahey
Policy Author	Executive Director Quality, Teaching and Learning) – Matthew Twitchett
Roles Responsible for Reviewing	Executive Director Quality, Teaching and Learning.
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Significant changes following review of policy & Procedure

Page Number or Heading Name	Details of significant change	Changes made by
Throughout	Policy updated to include more detailed information	Dani Brookes, HE Examinations and Assessments Officer

Equality Impact Assessment

The aim of an equality impact assessment (EIA) is

to consider the equality implications of any new or amended policy, procedure, practice, project, function on different groups of staff, students and visitors to the University Centre. This EIA tool provides a simple framework that helps evaluate whether the change may inadvertently disadvantage protected characteristics and identify ways to proactively advance and promote equality.

You will need to consider each of the equations and provide information as to consideration and any changes made in relation to Equality, diversity and inclusion.

Date EIA completed.	25-7-24
Name of person responsible for completing the EIA	Matthew Twitchett
Role of person responsible for completing the EIA	Executive Director of Quality, Teaching and Learning
Who is affected by the policy / decision / change	Students and Staff employed
What's the reason for the new policy / change in policy, practice, process etc.	This is a yearly review and update required by awarding organisations

You will need to consider whether it's possible that the proposed new policy / change in policy / procedure/practice etc could discriminate or unfairly discriminate or disadvantage people. You should consider:

Who gets to participate	Who does not, or who now does not due to the changes proposed / made.
Who is at an advantage	Who is at a disadvantage, and again has this changed?
Who will benefit	Who will not benefit (or who did and now doesn't due to the changes proposed in policy
Who can access the policy	Who cannot, or now cannot.

Protected Characteristic	What degree of impact does the change have (score 1-5 with one being lowest impact and 5 being the highest)	What is a potential positive, neutral or negative impact? Include what you have considered. Are there any barriers?	What action will be taken to address any negative impact or remove any potential barriers identified? Note if we are not able to resolve anything identified.	Date by when and whom will this action be taken.
Age	1	None identified		
Disability	1	Some students may need support in understanding the policy and help in raising an appeal. This will be provided by the student support teams in the University Centre.	Students with an identified disability can seek support from a Carer/Parent or Guardian and the University Centre.	As and when required
Gender (Sex)	1	None identified		
Gender Reassignment	1	None identified		
Marriage or Civil Partnership	1	None identified		
Pregnancy / Maternity	1	None Identified		
Race	1	None identified		
Religion or Religious Belief	1	None identified		
Sexual Orientation	1	None identified		
Any other element that needs to be considered.	1	None identified		

Note:

1. The terms stated under protected characteristics are the terminology used in the Equality Act 2010.
2. As part of the policy approval process Executive Board will consider the EIA assessment and any potential barriers which we may not be able to overcome and whether the action proposed will mitigate sufficiently within legislation or whether we decide to not implement the new policy if the risk are significant. If the policy is approved the EIA is also approved.

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Introduction

Academic integrity is a fundamental principle of Higher Education, ensuring that all assessments are conducted fairly and that qualifications reflect a student's own work and abilities. This document outlines the policies and procedures related to academic offences at University Centre South Essex (UCSE), which will be referred to as The University Centre henceforth. It defines what constitutes an academic offence, including but not limited to plagiarism, collusion, contract cheating, and other forms of dishonest conduct.

Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic conduct and are responsible for familiarising themselves with these regulations, as well as the associated policies on Plagiarism and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Procedures for the identification, investigation, and adjudication of academic offences are detailed, including the role of the Academic Offences Committee, the rights of students during the process, and the range of penalties that may be applied.

By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a fair and credible academic environment.

Full details of Policies and Procedures can be found on our website under Key HE Information and Pearson BTEC Higher National Programmes (Level 4 and 5) [HE Policies, Procedures and Downloads | South Essex University Centre](#).

1. Academic Offences

1.1 Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage may be considered as an offence and dealt with under this and associated procedures. Each case will be considered on its own merits, and on the basis of:

- The gravity of the case
- The circumstances of the case
- The level at which the offence took place
- Whether the offence was a repeat offence

1.2 Academic Offences may include:

- Plagiarism, occurs when, in an assessment, you use or reproduce material without any or without sufficient attribution to the original source
- Self-plagiarism, when you reuse material that you've already submitted for an assessment here or at another University Centre
- Collusion, when you and someone else work together to produce work that you or they submit for an assessment. This might involve interacting (in person, by phone, email, messaging, social media, or any other way) with another person or company to complete the assessment task, such as by sharing answers or parts of answers
- Contract Cheating, when the student's assessment has been completed for you partially or wholly by a third party or by Artificial Intelligence (AI) software. The third party might be a friend or family member, another student or an academic, or a commercial provider sometimes referred to as an 'essay mill'. It is contract cheating whether you pay them or not and whether you acknowledge this source or not
- Falsifying data or evidence
- Submitting a fraudulent claim of Extenuating Circumstances (EC)
- Copying the work of another student, or communicating (or attempting to communicate) with another student during a timed assessment
- Brining any written, printed or electronically stored information into a timed assessment unless expressly permitted in the instructions for that assessment
- Assisting another student to commit any academic offence
- Attempting to interfere with any assessment process

This list is not exhaustive.

- 1.3** In submitting any piece of work, a student shall acknowledge any assistance received or any use of the work of others by referencing.
- 1.4** A student may be found guilty of an academic offence whether or not there has been any intention to deceive; that is, a finding of negligence may be sufficient to determine that an academic offence has occurred, even without intent to deceive.

2. Student Responsibility

- 2.1** Students have a duty to familiarise themselves with this policy along with the Plagiarism Procedure for BTEC Higher Nationals and the HE AI Policy. It is the responsibility of the student to know the academic conventions used for correctly citing and acknowledging the work of others, including the correct use of quotation marks using the Harvard

referencing style. For further advice on these you can refer to the Student Programme Handbooks, personal tutor or the HE Academic Skills Advisor who can be contacted at HESupport@southessex.ac.uk .

3. Determination of Whether an Offence has Occurred

- 3.1 Any suspected or alleged incidents of academic offence must be referred to the Academic Offences Committee for investigation.
- 3.2 The student will be notified that there is an open investigation into the alleged misconduct, citing what type of misconduct is suspected to have occurred.
- 3.3 The student will be asked to provide any evidence in their defence, details of any mitigating circumstances that have led to the offence or admit to the offence within 5 working days. It is almost always better to admit it if you are, indeed, guilty.
- 3.4 If the offence is covered under another policy e.g. Use of Artificial Intelligence (Ai) Policy, regulations within that policy will be considered in the decision making process.
- 3.5 The student will be invited to a meeting with the Academic Offences Committee to discuss the alleged or admitted offence. This meeting may require the student to answer questions regarding the offence in question.

4. Record of Offences

- 4.1 The University Centre must keep a record of outcomes in respect of all investigations in case of further breaches. This will remain on the student's file for 5 years past completion, in line with The Office for Students (OFS) guidelines.

5. Right of Appeal

- 5.1 A student has the right to appeal a finding of an academic offence. Please refer to the Procedure for Academic Appeal Pearson Higher Nationals for further information on this process. This can be found under Pearson BTEC Higher National Programmes (Level 4 and 5) [HE Policies, Procedures and Downloads | South Essex University Centre](#) .
- 5.2 The Academic Appeals procedure allows students an opportunity to Appeal against any assessment or disciplinary decision where they feel that the policies have not been properly conducted or where they believe that the academic or disciplinary decision is unfair.

6. Assessment Board

- 6.1 Assessment Boards are required to note any instance of upheld Academic Offences and report these to the External Examiner.

7. Academic Offences Committee

- 7.1 Record of Attendance:
A full list of members of the Academic Offences Committee must be recorded.

The Academic Offences Committee shall consist of:

- The Deputy Executive Director - HE and Quality
- Two members of staff from outside the student's school who have no connection with the case

Details of the tutor or staff member who raised the concern, the student under investigation and any companion will also be recorded.

- 7.2 Chair:
Deputy Executive Director of HE and Quality or a Head of School as appointed by the Deputy Executive Director

- 7.3 Companion:
The student is permitted to bring a support companion with them to the meeting if they wish. The companion must have no connection with the allegations and therefore no material interest in the situation and must not be a member of academic staff. The companion cannot answer questions for the student with the exception of students with a known disability or learning need who require assistance with communication and processing information.

The companion can be a member of HE Support or The HE Wellbeing team and it is the students responsibility to arrange for the companion to be present. You must tell the Academic Offences Committee if their attendance no later than 2 working days before the meeting. This must include of the identify and status of the companion e.g. John Doe, HE Support.

- 7.4 Order of Proceedings:
- The members of the Committee will have a preliminary discussion without the tutor or staff member who raised the concern and the student, to review the provided documentation of investigation
 - The student, companion and staff member who raised the concern will be invited to enter the room and the Chair introduces all those present
 - The Chair checks that the student has received details of the case and any supporting documentation

- The Chair explains the order of proceedings to the student
- The evidence relating to the alleged offence is then presented by the staff member as to why they raised the concern and members of the Committee are invited to put questions to them
- The Chair then invites the student to put forward a case verbally if he or she wishes to do so including any mitigation, and members of the committee (but not staff member who raised the concern) are invited to put questions to the student
- The Chair invites the staff member who raised the concern to put forward any additional statement
- The Chair invites the student to make any final response
- The student, companion and the staff member who raised the concern are then asked to leave the room
- The Committee then deliberates and comes to a decision as to whether an offence has been committed
- The Committee then determines the appropriate penalty from the set of penalties available to it, clarifying the reasons for the choice of penalty
- The student, companion and staff member who raised the concern are then recalled to the room to be told the decision as to whether the alleged offence is upheld and, if so, what the penalty applied will be and the reasons why this is the appropriate penalty.
- Each student is informed in writing of the Committee's decision and of the student's right to appeal against the decision within ten working days of the meeting.

7.5 Responsibilities:

The chair is required to:

- Inform in writing each student whose case has been referred to him or her about the nature of the alleged offence within 10 working days
- Check the Academic Offences Records to determine whether there has been any previous confirmed academic offence
- Inform each student in writing of his or her decision and the student's right to appeal against the decision (a copy must be kept both in the student's file and in the central file) within 10 working days of the meeting being held
- Any cases involving breaches of the University Centres' Academic Offence regulations must be referred to the Executive Director Student Experience

- Where appropriate, a student is entitled to see a copy of paperwork relating to the alleged offence at least one day prior to the meeting Academic Offences Committee meeting

7.6 Programme Leader:

The staff member who raised the concern will attend the Committee to set out the evidence relating to the alleged offence. The Programme Leaders should not present any mitigating circumstances of which he/she is aware unless they relate to the University Centres procedures or teaching. They cannot propose or comment on any penalty that might be imposed but may give a character statement if they wish.

The staff member who raised the concern is not a member of the Committee and can only attend when the student is present (not before or after). The Programme Leader is not permitted to ask questions of the student during the meeting except with invitation from the Chair.

8. Student Attendance and Representation

- 8.1 The student will be given a minimum of 5 working days notice of the details of the meeting. The student must attend an Investigative Meeting if one is called. In the event of a clash with their timetable or other obligations, then unless the timetable shows an examination or course test, the student is expected to attend this meeting. Exceptionally, a meeting can be rearranged for other good reasons, such as a hospital appointment if evidence is provided.
- 8.2 The student under investigation will be invited to be present at the committee whenever verbal evidence is being heard by the Committee. He or she may bring a companion as stated above in section 7.3.
- 8.3 If the student admits to the alleged academic offence upon notification of the investigation, or the investigation meeting he or she need not attend the Academic Offences Committee meet and the Committee shall be free to proceed without student attendance. In such a case a student may submit a statement in mitigation.
- 8.4 Where appropriate, a student is entitled to see a copy of paperwork relating to the alleged offence at least one day prior to the Academic Offences Committee, this is a decision of the Chair.

9. Decisions Available to an Academic Offences Committee

- 9.1 The following penalties may be applied by the committee
 - unit assignment reassessed
 - assign a "Fail" grade and only permit submission of pass criteria

- determine that the student has failed the level and is required to withdraw from the programme of study

9.2 The guidelines presented below are guidelines only and it is very important that those making decisions about penalties take the evidence with which they have been provided and any mitigating circumstances into account.

Table 1: Guidelines for penalties for upheld Academic Offences

	Offence	Penalties graded by severity
Band A	<u>Relatively minor offence</u> – e.g. plagiarising a few lines; taking a few notes into test.	1. A formal written warning only 2. Unit of assessment to be referenced correctly/rewritten.
Band B	<u>severe offence</u> – e.g. plagiarism is somewhat more extensive (but less than 25%), the sources plagiarised are not listed but there is still a substantial proportion of the student's own work; or the plagiarism is more extensive but the work submitted is <u>an early unit of assessment for a Unit</u> , and the evidence indicates that there has been a failure to understand the academic conventions.	2. Unit of assessment reassessed. Work may be an alternative assessment. 3. Assign a "Fail" grade. Resubmission will be a maximum of a "Pass" grade. Reassessed work may be an alternative assessment.
Band C	<u>Very severe offence</u> – e.g. plagiarism extending to a substantial proportion of the work (25% or more); obtaining work from someone else; copying the work of another student almost in its entirety; attempts to avoid detection by plagiarism software.	4. Assign a "Fail" grade Resubmission will be a maximum of a "Pass" grade. Reassessed work may be an alternative assessment. 5. Assign a "Fail" grade with no resubmission or second attempt. 6. Determine that the student has failed the level and is required to withdraw from the programme of study.

Table 2: Guidelines for penalties for subsequent cases of upheld Academic Offences

Subsequent Offence is Band A	Subsequent Offence is Band B	Subsequent Offence is Band C
2.Unit of assessment reassessed. Resubmission may be an alternative assessment. 3.Assign a “Fail” grade Resubmission will be a maximum of a “Pass” grade. Reassessed work may be an alternative assessment.	4. Assign a “Fail” grade Resubmission will be a maximum of a “Pass” grade. Reassessed work may be an alternative assessment. 5. Assign a “Fail” grade with no resubmission or second attempt	5. Assign a “Fail” grade with no resubmission or second attempt. 6.Determine that the student has failed the level and is required to withdraw from the programme of study.

The University Centre is under a duty to report instances of assessment malpractice directly to Pearson. This will be completed by the Executive Director of Quality, Teaching and Learning.

10. Appeals

- 10.1 A student who wishes to appeal against the outcome of these procedures should write to the Chair within 10 working days of the hearing setting out in detail the nature of the evidence to support the claim that there were procedural irregularities in the appeals process. If *prima facie* there is evidence to support the claim then the case will be reviewed by the Executive Director of Quality, Teaching.
- 10.2 Please refer to the Procedure for Academic Appeal Pearson Higher Nationals for full details of the appeals process. This is available on our HE Policies, Procedures and Downloads under HE Key Information or Pearson BTEC Higher National Programmes (Level 4-5).

End of Procedure

