

## **Academic Misconduct Procedure**

### **Introduction**

The National Film and Television School ('the NFTS') is committed to delivering a high-quality service and excellent teaching and learning opportunities, and to upholding academic standards and integrity. At the same time it is expected that students themselves will act responsibly, honestly and with integrity, and will not engage in any improper activity or behaviour which may give them an advantage in an assessment.

Any such activity or behaviour by any student may be considered to be an act of academic misconduct and dealt with through the NFTS's Academic Misconduct Policy.

Advice about academic writing and study skills is available to students within their department and from their dissertation tutor, in the David Lean Library, in the Student Information Handbook and on external websites. Appendix B lists further external resources which may be of assistance.

Incidents of suspected non-academic misconduct should be dealt with using the School's [Student Misconduct Policy](#).

### **1. What constitutes Academic Misconduct?**

Academic misconduct is any improper activity or behavior which may give a student an advantage in an assessment and refers to any form of academic cheating. The following circumstances are examples of academic misconduct, although this list is not exhaustive, and fall under this policy:

- Plagiarism – presenting the work of others as if it were the student's own without acknowledging the source
- Self-plagiarism – presenting work which the student has previously submitted for assessment without referencing this
- Collusion – colluding with any other person to submit work which is not the student's own
- Contract cheating – commissioning any other person, including an essay mill or ghost-writing agency, to produce work on the student's behalf
- Content produced by AI software tools or Large Language Models does not represent the student's original content. Using generative AI platforms to generate text which is submitted for assessment is considered a form of academic misconduct.

Students are strongly advised to retain copies of drafts produced and details of reference and source material used while preparing assessed work, as this will be of assistance in demonstrating that the work is their own.

### **2. General policy**

- 2.1 Any student subject to this procedure will be entitled to be accompanied by and/or represented at any stage by a staff member or current student (student representative or otherwise) of the School. Neither the School nor the student will normally be permitted to be represented by a legal practitioner at meetings or hearings held under this procedure.
- 2.2 The School may proceed with any steps under this procedure in the absence of the student, or if the student does not engage with the procedure.

- 2.3 In exceptional cases, the School reserves the right at any stage of this procedure to vary the process it follows in the interests of fairness and/or health and safety.
- 2.4 Any reference to a specific member of staff under this procedure (for example, the Registrar) should be read as including alternate reference to the member of staff's delegate or nominee.
- 2.5 In operating this procedure, the School will remain mindful of its legal obligations including its duty of care, its obligation under the Equality Act 2010 (including to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students), and its obligations under Data Protection legislation.

**3. Stage 1 – Initial Investigation**

- 3.1 Where someone suspects, or is informed of, an incidence of academic misconduct, that person (or someone acting on that person's behalf) should report the suspicion or incidence to the student's Head of Department.
- 3.2 Upon receiving notification of a suspicion or incidence of academic misconduct, the Head of Department will inform the student, in writing, of the allegation of academic misconduct and conduct an investigation including discussing the matter with the student. The Head of Department may ask the student for copies of drafts of their work and details of any reference material used in the production of the assessed work. The Head of Department will then consider the results of the investigation.

Where the Head of Department concludes that academic misconduct has not taken place, they will inform the student that no further action will be taken.

**Minor misconduct**

- 3.3 Where the Head of Department considers that academic misconduct has taken place and it is minor in nature, it can usually be handled informally, with appropriate guidance and support for the student.

Examples of minor academic misconduct are:

- a first-time minor offence of plagiarism or self-plagiarism
- a minor offence of academic misconduct resulting from negligence or intent, where a student sought to attribute their work to sources or comply with this policy.

In this case the Head of Department should:

- 1) issue either a verbal or written warning to the student that his or her conduct is unacceptable;
- 2) give guidance to the student as to how s/he should modify his or her conduct;

- 3) inform the student that another occurrence of the incident may result in the conduct being treated as serious academic misconduct, including that an Academic Misconduct Panel may be called;
- 4) follow up the verbal warning with a written summary of the warning within five working days of the meeting taking place or issue a formal written warning also within five working days of meeting with the student;
- 5) require the student to re-do and re-submit the relevant work by a specified deadline, and specify if any mark awarded for that work is capped at a maximum level (for example, a Pass mark).

### **Repeated Misconduct or Serious Misconduct**

3.4 Where the Head of Department considers that academic misconduct has taken place and it is of multiple incidents or serious in nature, the Head of Department will prepare a written report and submit it to the Registrar, together with the evidence.

Examples of repeated or serious academic misconduct are:

- a minor offence of plagiarism or self-plagiarism subsequent to any first-time offence
- any other offence of academic misconduct which is not minor, including collusion and contract cheating.

The Registrar (or their nominee) will then:

- 1) consider the report and evidence and determine an appropriate course of action, based upon the severity of the allegation;
- 2) if they consider that there is insufficient evidence for the case to go forward for further consideration, the student will be informed in writing that the case has been closed and require the report, evidence and any correspondence in relation to the case to be kept as a record;
- 3) if the student has admitted to committing repeated or serious academic misconduct in breach of this policy the Registrar will make a recommendation to the Director of Curriculum and the Head of Department on the severity of the misconduct and an appropriate penalty;
- 4) if the student has denied committing repeated or serious academic misconduct in breach of this policy and there is sufficient evidence for an Academic Misconduct Panel to be formed to consider the case, the Registrar will convene an Academic Misconduct Panel Hearing and appoint a Secretary to the Academic Misconduct Panel – this will usually be the Quality Assurance Manager. The Registrar will inform the student (i) that they will be required to attend an Academic Misconduct

Panel Hearing, (ii) of the date of the Academic Misconduct Panel Hearing, (iii) that they have the right to bring a current student (representative or otherwise) or staff member with him or her<sup>1</sup>, (iv) that if they do not attend the Academic Misconduct Panel Hearing, the Panel may take place in their absence and disciplinary action may be taken against them, (v) about the services available from the Student Wellbeing and Support Team. The Registrar will provide the student with full details of the allegation of academic misconduct, including the Head of Department's written report and any evidence to be considered.

#### **4. Academic Misconduct Panel Hearing**

4.1 An Academic Misconduct Panel shall normally consist of at least three independent academic Heads of Department or other senior staff as appropriate. During the Academic Misconduct Panel Hearing:

- the evidence following the investigation of the incident/s should be presented either by the Head of Department for the student or another senior member of School staff, depending on the nature of the incident/s. This may include witnesses or signed witness statements;
- the student should be invited to present any evidence in support of their case, this may include witnesses or signed witness statements;
- the Academic Misconduct Panel may seek procedural advice from other members of staff as appropriate and may also invite them to the Academic Misconduct Panel Hearing.

4.2 Following due consideration of all evidence for or against the alleged incidents/s of academic misconduct, the Academic Misconduct Panel will make one of the following recommendations:

- 1) to dismiss the allegation and take no further action, either because the student has no case to answer or because the allegation has not been proven; or
- 2) to determine that one or more of the allegations has been proven and the student has committed academic misconduct; or
- 3) to refer the allegation for consideration under another School regulation or procedure.

4.3 Where it considers that the allegation has been proven, the Academic Misconduct Panel will determine which, if any, penalty as set out in Appendix A should be applied.

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<sup>1</sup> The supporter may not speak on the student's behalf, and may not be a legal representative.

- 4.4 When deciding a penalty the Academic Misconduct Panel must take into account any mitigating or aggravating circumstances.
- 4.5 The Academic Misconduct Panel may take into account any circumstances presented by the student when applying any of the penalties set out in Appendix A, and will apply a penalty that is appropriate in all the circumstances. The Academic Misconduct Panel must ensure that a penalty does not incur any unintended consequences either for the student, or for other students.
- 4.6 The Academic Misconduct Panel will inform the student in writing, normally within 5 working days of the decision, of the outcome of the case and will set out the reasons for the decision.
- 4.7 A confidential record will be kept on the student's file, which will include the minutes of the Academic Misconduct Panel Hearing and details of subsequent actions.
- 4.8 The Director of Curriculum will be informed of the outcome of the Academic Misconduct Panel Hearing.
- 4.9 Where the Academic Misconduct Panel applies a penalty under Appendix A, the student may submit a request for an appeal against the decision in line with Section 4 of these procedures.

## 5. Appeals

A student may appeal against a decision of academic misconduct made against them. The appeal may be submitted in accordance with the Student Academic Appeals Procedure, except that only the following shall constitute valid grounds for appeal:

- the Academic Misconduct Panel has demonstrated bias or prejudice in the way it has conducted itself;
- the Academic Misconduct Panel has not followed its published procedures in this policy;
- a material administrative error has occurred in the finding of academic misconduct.

## 6. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

Decisions taken under this procedure may be eligible for review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), which is an independent body set up to review student complaints. More information about the OIA can be accessed at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>. The OIA can be contacted at 0118 959 9813 or [enquiries@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oiahe.org.uk). Where applicable, students will be provided with a Completion of Procedures Letter and information about how to apply to the OIA for a

review of a decision taken under this procedure. It should be noted that matters must be referred to the OIA within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter.

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## **Indicative List of Penalties for Academic Misconduct**

For repeated or serious incidents of academic misconduct, any one or more of the following penalties may be imposed:

- a) the relevant work may be graded a Fail, and the student may be permitted to re-do the work for a capped grade of Pass;
- b) the student's overall achievement grade for the award for which they are studying may be capped at a Pass;
- c) the student's achievement grade in respect of Professional Orientation may be graded as a Fail;
- d) the relevant work may be graded a Fail and the student may be disbarred from receiving the award of a Masters;
- e) the student may be expelled from the School and barred from re-entry, which means that the student shall cease to be a student of the School and will lose all rights and privileges of being a student. The Academic Misconduct Panel will decide whether the student should be awarded an intermediate award based on any credit already achieved.

## Resources:

The University of London's International Programmes has a brief [Plagiarism Nutshell Guide](#) that sets out what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

[Avoiding Plagiarism for Beginners](#) from University College London's Institute of Education also gives very useful information on plagiarism and is easy to follow.