

# Academic Malpractice Policy

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Issue: 3.1

Issue Date: January 2021

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## Aims

- To identify and minimise the risk of malpractice by learners
- To respond to any incident of alleged malpractice promptly and objectively.
- To standardise and record any investigation of malpractice to ensure openness and fairness
- To impose appropriate penalties/ sanctions on learners where incidents or attempted incidents of malpractice are proven.

In order to do this, SIRM will:

- Seek to avoid potential malpractice by using the induction and the learner handbook to inform learners of SIRM's policy on malpractice and penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice.
- Ensure that all learners attend an appropriate taught session (in campus or on-line) on good academic practice during the first semester.
- Store assessment materials securely.
- Control and alter assessments on regular basis in line with awarding body requirements.
- Provide appropriate training to invigilators and assessors
- Ask learners to sign declaration that their work is their own
- Ask learners to acknowledge any sources used as per Harvard Referencing guidance
- Conduct an investigation in a form commensurate with the nature of the malpractice allegation

## Purpose

Malpractice refers to any deliberate act or practice which compromises, or threatens to compromise the process and integrity of assessment, and as a result the validity of the result or qualification awarded.

The purpose of this policy is to reduce the risk of malpractice by increasing awareness and understanding of the actions that constitute malpractice by learners.

The School of Information Risk Management (SIRM) is committed to the provision of high quality education and training. This policy states how SIRM will process instances of assessment Malpractice by Learners.

All offences in connection with examinations and other forms of assessment will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter and will be processed in accordance with the Learner Disciplinary procedure.

SIRM will adhere to the regulations specified in the relevant Awarding Body regulations.

## Learner Malpractice

The categories listed below are examples of learner malpractice either by a single learner or by a group of learners who, at the time of the incident studying at SIRM. The list is not exhaustive:

- plagiarism of any nature
- Inclusion of inappropriate material that could be deemed to be offensive, discriminatory or obscene in assessment evidence
- producing work that is unrelated to the assessment paper
- assisting other learner to gain an advantage in assessment by unfair means, or receiving such assistance from other learner
- cheating in examination

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- bringing unauthorised materials into examination
- failure to abide by instructions given by an invigilator
- bribery
- impersonation by pretending to be someone else in order to produce the work for another or arranging for another to take one's place in an assessment or hire to write assignment (ghost writing).
- providing false information to gain entry to a qualification or to be exempt from an assessment
- fraudulent claims for special consideration, while studying and/or assessment. This might include forged or falsified documentation

## Procedure for Dealing with Academic Malpractice in a Timed Examination

- Where an invigilator suspects that any form of cheating has occurred in an examination she/he will report to Senior Invigilator, who will:
  - Inform the learner of her/his suspicions and of her/his intention to report the incident
  - Confiscate any relevant evidence (e.g. any unauthorised material)
  - Annotate the learner's script and endorse the front cover at the point at which the alleged cheating was identified
  - Return the script to the learner and permit him/her to continue with the examination and to conclude at the normal stipulated time
  - Record this activity on Senior Invigilator report form
- Where the procedure outlined leads to an unreasonable disturbance or disruption to examination conditions or where the procedure is invoked against a learner for a second time in that examination the Senior Invigilator has the authority to disqualify learner's work and remove the learner from the examination room. The Senior Invigilator will record the action taken in their report of the examination so that the assessors marking the scripts are aware of any disturbance or disruption.
- No later than one working day after the conclusion of the examination, the Senior Invigilator will submit a written report to the Academic Administration office and the Head of the relevant department. The report should provide an account of the incident, including the time of the incident and the learner's response to the allegation, and be accompanied by any relevant supporting evidence including any confiscated materials. Where possible, the report should include the comments, and signatures, of other invigilators who were present at the time at which the alleged cheating took place. In this instance, the examination script should be marked by the relevant assessor; but should then be made available to the Investigation Panel if required.
- Suspicion of Malpractice in an examination will be investigated as a potentially major offence. Following the submission of the Senior Invigilator report, the procedure for investigating such allegations follows the common procedure for academic malpractice.

## Procedure for Dealing with Suspected Assessment Malpractice

A person suspecting a case of academic malpractice must inform the head of department on the relevant programme in writing by submitting report and attaching any relevant evidence.

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Learners suspected of malpractice must be made fully aware, in writing, at the earliest opportunity of the nature of the alleged malpractice in accordance with the Learner Disciplinary Policy.

Plagiarism Policy must be followed in suspected cases of plagiarism as well as for guidance on plagiarism detection and interpretation.

The programme head will investigate the case presented and decide whether to:

- Recommend proceeding with the case as a major offence
- Recommend proceeding with the case as a minor offence
- Dismiss the case

## Minor Offence

This should be used when:

- It is the learner's first offence and
- Where it appears that the learner has failed to understand the regulations and has offended unintentionally or in error.

This procedure may be applied in the case of an individual learner on one occasion only.

The Head of Department will no later than 5 working days from receipt of the report will discuss the matter with the learner, providing advice and guidance on academic malpractice and appropriate referencing. Where it is clear that an offence has occurred but has been undertaken by mistake or misunderstanding, a penalty will be imposed which will involve the following:

- The learner will be informed that the assessment concerned will be given a Fail mark and learner will be given an opportunity to resubmit the assignment or retake the exam without further penalty.
- Learner will be given a formal letter of reprimand from Head of Department and a copy of it will be placed on learner file.

Should the Head of Department decide that there is no reasonable ground for confirming the suspicion of an offence, it shall consider the work on its academic merits and all record of the alleged malpractice will be removed from the learner record.

## Major Offence

Major offence includes all cases where academic malpractice was intentional and/or deliberate. It also includes any repeated suspected offences.

Any case of suspected serious academic malpractice, as well as repeated malpractice, must be referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

Where a serious (repeated) academic malpractice is suspected or alleged, the Head of Department will clarify the suspicion or allegation and determine whether a *prima facie* case can be established:

- The allegation fits the definition of academic malpractice
- The assessed work of the learner can be produced in evidence
- The evidence for the academic malpractice can be identified and highlighted

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- The individual learner's understanding of the assessment is consistent with the allegation or suspicion. This shall be tested by arranging and holding an oral interview with the learner
- The performance of the learner in other assessments is comparable with, or is markedly worse than for the assessment in question.
- In cases of suspected or alleged collusion, that the assessed work actually supports an allegation of collusion, whether all learners were involved in the collusion, or whether some learner(s) used the work of other(s) unknown to the other(s).

The Head of the Department will inform the Chair of the Disciplinary Committee of the results of the investigation. Should there be a *prima facie* case to be considered, the Chair of the Disciplinary Committee will establish an Investigating Panel.

Records of offences will be retained on the learner record system and on the learner's file. In all cases of detected malpractice the learner will be given a formal letter of reprimand from Head of Department and a copy of it will be placed on learner file.

MINOR / 1 <sup>ST</sup> OFFENCE	MAJOR / 2 <sup>ND</sup> OFFENCE	3 <sup>RD</sup> OFFENCE
<p>The learner will be awarded FAIL grade for the assessment. Learner will be given an opportunity to resubmit the assignment, retake the exam without further penalty. This will count as a second attempt at the assessment.</p> <p>Learner will be given a formal letter of reprimand from Head of Department and a copy of it will be placed on learner file.</p>	<p>The learner will be awarded FAIL grade for the assessment.</p> <p>Case referred to the Disciplinary Committee. Depending on the extent of the malpractice offence the Committee may recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the learner will be offered the last opportunity to submit the work, take a re-sit which will be marked on a pass/fail basis</li><li>• the learner will be awarded FAIL mark for the unit.</li><li>• the learner will be excluded from the programme</li></ul> <p>Learner will be given a formal letter of reprimand from Head of Department and a copy of it will be placed on learner file.</p>	<p>FAIL grade for the unit.</p> <p>Case will be referred to Disciplinary Committee with recommendation for discontinuation of studies at SIRM.</p> <p>Outcome recorded on learner file.</p>

## Conducting the Investigation

The fundamental principle of investigations is to conduct them in a fair, reasonable, and legal manner, ensuring that all relevant evidence is considered without bias.

The process of investigation will be conducted in accordance with:

- Confidentiality

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- Retention of evidence
- Evidence storage
- Conclusions reached
- Actions
- Appropriate awarding body guidelines o malpractice

The objective of the investigation is to establish the facts relating to allegations / complaints in order to determine whether any assessment irregularities have occurred.

SIRM will:

- Identify the cause of the irregularities and those involved
- Establish the scale of the irregularities
- Identify any patterns or trends
- Ascertain whether any action is required in respect of certificates already issued

## Appeals against Malpractice Decisions

Learners have the right to submit an academic appeal against the outcome of the Malpractice Decisions provided the application meets SIRM's grounds for appeal and is submitted in accordance with the deadline stipulated on the letter confirming the decision of the Panel.

SIRM's grounds for an Academic Appeal are:

- material computational or administrative error
- irregularity in conduct of a Panel of Inquiry in contravention of the relevant regulations or published processes
- exceptional mitigating circumstances, details which were, for good reason, not previously available to the panel

Disagreement with a decision made by a Panel of Inquiry shall not, of itself, form grounds for an appeal.