

Academic Malpractice Policy

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Section 1: Overview

1.1 Purpose and Scope

1.1.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that Frontline, Lancaster University and its participants have confidence in the value and basis of the awards made;
- Outline Frontline’s expectations of learners at all stages of study on the Programme and the responsibilities of participants and staff members respectively in meeting those expectations and upholding academic integrity; and
- Provide a consistent and coherent approach to the treatment and progression of matters under this policy.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 **Academic Malpractice** is defined as a participant attempting successfully or unsuccessfully in obtaining for themselves, or another participant, an unfair advantage with a view to achieving a higher grade, mark or more favourable outcome that they would otherwise secure. Any attempt to convey deceitfully the impression of acquired knowledge, skills, understanding or credentials, shall represent a contravention of the regulations of Frontline and Lancaster University, and may constitute grounds for exclusion.

1.2.2 **Poor Academic Practice** means an unintended breach of academic practice or contravention where there has been no attempt to gain an unfair advantage and has occurred because of poor study skills.

1.3 Categories of Academic Malpractice

The following are examples of ‘academic malpractices’:

1.3.1 **Collusion:** This occurs where a piece of work prepared by a group is represented as if it were the participant’s own. This can also occur by enabling a fellow participant to obtain academic credit to which they are not entitled. This includes providing material or negligence in protecting work (in hard copy and electronic format) or performing all or part of an assigned task so that unfair advantage or credit may be obtained by another participant. This applies to both examination and coursework assessments.

1.3.2 Plagiarism: This occurs in the following circumstances:

- The act of copying or paraphrasing a paper from a source text, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, without appropriate acknowledgement (this includes quoting directly from another source with a reference but without quotation marks);
- The submission of all or part of another participant's work, whether with or without that participant's knowledge or consent;
- The commissioning or use of work by the participant which is not their own and representing it as if it were;
- The submission of all or part of work purchased or obtained from a commercial service;
- The submission of all or part of work written by another person;
- The reproduction of the same or almost identical own work, in full or in part, for more than one module or assessment (self-plagiarism). This does **not** include those assessments where the participant is permitted or required to develop previously assessed work into a larger argument for example the dissertation; or
- Directly copying from a model/solutions/answers made available in previous years.

1.3.3 Fabrication or Falsification of Results: This occurs when a participant claims to have carried out tests, experiments or observations that have not taken place or presents results not supported by the evidence with the object of obtaining an unfair advantage. This also includes practical work, number of hours (including hours in Practice and Contrasting Learning Experiences) completed, oral presentations, interviews and reports.

1.3.4 Cheating: This consists of attempts to complete an examination or in-class (including remote examinations) test by unfair means, including but not limited to:

- Deliberately acquiring advance knowledge of the content of an examination or an in-class test;
- Obtaining help from others in a manner not explicitly permitted by the regulations for the examination or test, including the use of mobile phones or any other electronic device capable of sending or receiving text and/or accessing the internet and/or stored information in whatever form and use thereof;
- Bringing into the examination or test any unauthorised materials or information;
- Communicating or attempts to communicate with a fellow participant or individual who is neither an invigilator nor a member of staff; or
- Copies, or attempts to copy, from a fellow participant.

1.3.5 **Impersonation:** This is the assumption by any person of the identity of a participant with intent to deceive or gain an unfair advantage.

Section 2: Policy and procedures

2.1 General principles

- 2.1.1 Frontline values a culture of honesty and mutual trust in its academic endeavours (academic integrity) and expects all members, participants and staff to respect and uphold these core values.
- 2.1.2 Frontline shall provide advice and guidance to participants on academic integrity and what constitutes academic malpractice and make participants aware of these regulations and the possible outcomes of proven academic malpractice. Participants have a responsibility to ensure that they are aware of Frontline's and Lancaster University's expectations and the regulations, and to take responsibility for the academic integrity of their own work.
- 2.1.3 Any participant who is alleged to have been involved in an act of academic malpractice shall have access to Lancaster University Students' Union support and advice at all stages of the procedures contained in these regulations.
- 2.1.4 Where assessments are text based they must be submitted in an electronic format so that text matching technology can be used. No hand-written assessments will be accepted.
- 2.1.5 Frontline reserves the right to use electronic software (e.g. Turnitin) for the purposes of detection of suspected academic malpractice. External Examiners shall also have the right to request access to this.
- 2.1.6 Decisions taken under this policy by a member of staff or panel shall be made on the basis of the balance of probability and take full account of the principles of natural justice, fairness and equity.
- 2.1.7 Frontline reserves the right to monitor the incidence of 'academic malpractices' for the tracking of any individual and for the provision and sharing of data to partner and external agencies as appropriate.

2.1.8 Every participant invited to an Academic Malpractice panel has the right to submit a defence to present information in support of their case. They may also bring someone to support them at the panel, such as a friend, colleague or Union representative.

2.2 Suspension while the Panel is pending

2.2.1 Where a participant is subject to an investigation regarding a possible academic malpractice, the delivery director may decide that the person's place on the programme is to be suspended until the Academic Malpractice panel have met.

2.2.2 The module lead can lodge a request by providing the basis, alongside all supporting evidence to academic registry who will present this information to the delivery director.

2.3 Academic Malpractice identification and investigation

2.3.1 The initial responsibility for detecting instances of suspected academic malpractice in all forms of assessment including examinations, in class tests and coursework (remote and in person) rests with each individual academic marker who need to be vigilant when assessing work. All academic markers shall make a positive effort to identify academic malpractice in remote examinations. This is a responsibility of their academic employment and a vital part of securing the academic integrity of these examinations.

2.3.2 Where an academic malpractice is suspected this policy **must** be followed. It is not acceptable to ignore a potential matter and attempt to impose informal penalties.

2.3.3 Where work submitted by participants is subject to these procedures, it should be marked and graded on the basis of the submission but should not be processed at the relevant Examination Board until the issue is concluded and an outcome determined.

2.3.4 The academic marker shall work in conjunction with the module lead when a concern is identified. They will use their judgement to decide whether the matter is poor academic practice or academic malpractice. Where the marker is external to Frontline the module or assessment lead will make this judgement.

Where it is decided that the participant's work displays some form of poor academic practice the academic marker will deal with this as part of the normal feedback and assessment procedures. The academic judgement of the academic marker may be that poor academic practice should lead to a significant reduction in the mark awarded or that

the affected work should be set aside, and the remaining work marked as normal. The participant must be informed of the nature of the problem and why it is unacceptable and a note of 'poor academic practice' shall be recorded in the participant record. Further guidance on dealing with poor academic practice can be found at [Lancaster Plagiarism Framework](#)

2.3.5 Where the participant work displays some form of poor academic practice, but the participant has not taken note of previous advice then the matter will be referred to be reviewed by the Academic Malpractice panel who may determine that an 'Academic Warning' be recorded on the participant record system.

2.3.6 Where the academic marker and module lead decide that the quantity of affected text is too great to be dealt with by setting the text aside or that there is suspicion of some form of academic malpractice then the matter shall be referred to the Academic Malpractice Panel. The academic marker will provide the panel with the investigation details and information.

2.4 Relationship to Fitness to Practise

2.4.1 As the Frontline Programme establishes suitability for social work training and professional practice, and further confers fitness to practise as approved by Social Work England, any academic malpractice should be considered (where necessary and relevant) in reference to question of suitability and fitness to practise. For example, a proven academic malpractice matter may trigger and commence a matter being reviewed under the Fitness to Practise Policy.

2.4.2 The implications that an academic malpractice is likely to have for a participant's suitability and fitness to practise should only be considered once the outcome of the academic malpractice is confirmed. To avoid doubt, the Academic Malpractice Panel must be held and concluded before a Fitness to Practise Panel is held.

2.5 Academic Malpractice Panel

2.5.1 The purpose of the Academic Malpractice Panel is to ensure that all alleged cases are investigated to determine if an academic malpractice has been committed and if proven

that they are dealt with formally, and to uphold the academic integrity of the programme and guarantee consistency of approach across Frontline.

- 2.5.2** The Academic Malpractice Panel will consider any previous history of poor academic practice and/or academic malpractice noted on a participant's file.
- 2.5.3** Membership of the Academic Malpractice Panel includes, among others: principal curriculum leads, principal practice tutors, heads of delivery and the registrar. An Academic Malpractice Panel will comprise of 3 members to be quorate.
- 2.5.4** The participant will be notified, in writing as per 2.5.6, once a matter has been referred to be considered by the Academic Malpractice Panel.
- 2.5.5** Every participant invited to an Academic Panel has the right to submit a defence to present information in support of their case. They may also bring someone to support them at the Panel, such as a friend, colleague, or Union Representative.
- 2.5.6** The participant in question will be notified, normally via email, in no later than 10 working days before the Panel date and provided with the following information:
- confirmation of the allegation and which assessment is being reviewed by the panel;
 - the hearing date, time and location (participants will normally attend via skype);
 - the right to be accompanied by a friend, colleague or Union Representative, should they wish to do so;
 - that they may call witnesses to support their case (whose identity must be notified to the secretary of the panel prior to the hearing in order that their attendance can be assured);
 - provided with copies of the evidence which will be considered by the panel; and
 - that there is no automatic right to postpone or arrange the scheduled date and if the date is not convenient the participant has the right to provide written submissions (including any necessary evidence). In such cases friends, colleagues or Union Representatives are not permitted to attend.
- 2.5.7** At the hearing a member of Frontline staff may be in attendance to provide evidence. The participant will be asked to respond (if in attendance) to the allegations regarding their work and may also wish to consider if there are any exceptional circumstances which should be made known to the Academic Malpractice Panel.

2.5.8 The panel will determine if the matter is found proven, upon majority decision, if it is substantiated based on a reasonable interpretation of the evidence and on the balance of probabilities.

2.6 Academic Malpractice Panel decision and penalties

2.6.1 In making the decision the Academic Malpractice panel should consider and apply the following criteria, this is not an exhaustive set of criteria:

- **Premeditation:** the participant planned in advance to gain an unfair advantage (this makes it a more serious case)
- **Intention:** the participant intended to gain an unfair advantage (the greater the intended unfair advantage, the greater the seriousness)
- **Recklessness:** the participant's behaviour was reckless and thus gained an unfair advantage
- **Circumstances:** the circumstances and location in which the malpractice took place (the greater the damage to Frontline's reputation or impact to the academic integrity the greater the seriousness)

2.6.2 The Academic Malpractice panel may impose one of the following outcomes or penalties:

- That no action of any kind will be taken. Where appropriate this may mean that the Academic Marker shall be instructed to mark the work normally;
- That the matter should be considered as a matter of poor academic practice and dealt with as described at 2.3.5;
- That an academic warning is noted on the participant record system, this is normally when a participant has repeated poor academic practice as per 2.3.6;
- That the participant be required to submit an alternative piece of work and such work shall be eligible to receive only the minimum pass mark. If the participant refuses or fails to submit the work, a mark of zero shall be recorded. This choice is never available where the malpractice is in connection with cheating in a class test or an already granted resubmission opportunity;
- That the case should be referred to the Standing Academic Committee, held by Lancaster University, due to the seriousness of the matter or there being repeated allegations.

2.6.3 The Chair will convey the outcome decision in writing, normally by email, to the participant concerned within 7 working days of the Academic Malpractice panel hearing.

2.6.4 If the participant does not accept the decision of the Academic Malpractice panel they shall have the right to petition the Standing Academic Committee at Lancaster University to rehear the case, if they have reasonable belief that:

- There is new evidence that could not reasonably have been made available prior to the hearing;
- There is a material procedural irregularity which, had it not occurred, may have significantly affected the decision, outcome or both; or
- The penalty was too severe given the nature of the allegation or compared to outcomes on other participants in similar position, or both.

The participant has within 7 working days of receipt of the outcome to do so.

2.6.5 If the participant is deemed as having a prima facie request for review the matter will proceed to the Standing Academic Committee Hearing, whereby the participant shall have the right to be heard, accompanied by a friend or representative if desired.

2.7 Standing Academic Committee

2.7.1 If the matter is referred to Lancaster University Standing Academic Committee further details of the process and principles can be found at the following link:

<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/academic-standards-and-quality/regulations-policies-and-committees/manual-of-academic-regulations-and-procedures/>

2.8 Retrospective Detection

2.8.1 Retrospective detection is defined as the discovery of alleged academic malpractice in work that has been subject to final moderation, including by a relevant Board of examiners.

2.8.2 Lancaster University and/or Frontline shall reserve the right to review work retrospectively and to apply the appropriate procedures, and where reasonable, the appropriate penalties.

2.8.3 Approval by an Examination Board of a degree classification and/or award shall not prevent the reasonable application of retrospective review.

2.8.4 Lancaster University reserve the right to review and present the matter to the Standing Academic Committee as necessary. Please refer to Lancaster University Academic Malpractice Regulations and Procedures for more information.

<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/academic-standards-and-quality/regulations-policies-and-committees/manual-of-academic-regulations-and-procedures/>

2.9 Appeal

2.9.1 A participant who has been judged to have committed an academic malpractice by the Lancaster University Standing Academic Committee or another appropriate University body shall have the right to appeal against the judgement under Lancaster University's Academic Appeal Regulations. A participant's right to have their appeal heard by an Academic Appeal panel is conditional upon them fulfilling the criteria for a prima facie case.

Section 3: Relevant references

3.1 Frontline policies and documents

3.1.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:

- [Fitness to practise policy](#)
- Lancaster Academic Appeals Regulations
- Lancaster University Academic Malpractice Regulations and Procedures
- Lancaster University 'A Plagiarism Framework'