

STUDENT RESEARCH MISCONDUCT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

With effect from September 2019

1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 The university expects its postgraduate research students to conduct themselves with integrity and to operate to the highest ethical standards at all times. Implicit with this expectation is that no student will engage in research malpractice, as being proven to have done so is damaging to the individual concerned, their supervisors, their Department and Faculty, and the wider university as a whole. Additionally, such practices undermine the trust the wider community places in universities to make advances in knowledge through their research endeavours and dissemination of the findings in an open and honest way. This document sets out:
- what the university interprets as research misconduct in relation to its postgraduate research students;
 - the procedures to be followed in investigating suspected research malpractice in the event of any such issues being brought to the attention of the university;
 - the penalties that may be recommended and applied in cases that have been investigated and have led to the conclusion that such misconduct has taken place.
- 1.2 All conclusions at any level of investigation will find an allegation of research misconduct proven if it is considered that the evidence presented identifies, on the balance of probabilities, that the student is blameworthy of the misconduct.
- 1.3 Where relevant, the University will notify the relevant Research Council of an allegation of research misconduct at the stage that it is decided to undertake an informal inquiry. Research Councils UK (RCUK) may wish to seek observer status on formal investigations if circumstances warrant it.
- 1.4 Where relevant, the University will provide information on investigations of research misconduct to research funders and/or statutory bodies as required by their conditions of grant and other legal, professional and statutory obligations.

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 These regulations apply to postgraduate research students registered with the university for the specific purpose of working towards one of the university's approved research awards at either Level 7 (Masters) or Level 8 (Doctorate).
- 2.2 The taught course elements of the Masters by Research will be considered under the [*Academic Misconduct Procedure \(Taught Awards\)*](#).
- 2.2 The main focus of this policy is on any research malpractice, current or past, that is considered to have been perpetrated by a student during their time as a postgraduate research student at the university, whether such be present in any such documentation, paper or electronic, or in any other ways.
- 2.5 These regulations do not apply to members of University staff actively engaged in research who are not registered with the university for the specific purpose of working towards one of the university's approved research awards. Any allegation raised in these circumstances will be considered under the University's [*Procedure for Investigating Research Misconduct*](#).
- 2.6 The University reserves the right to refer any member of University staff registered for an approved research award to Human Resources should this procedure result in a proven case of research misconduct.

3 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 All members of the University including staff, students and external sources, have a responsibility to report any well-founded allegations of academic misconduct, whether this has been witnessed, or is suspected. Suspicions reported in confidence and in good faith will not lead to disciplinary proceedings against the person making the complaint.
- 3.2 In the event, however, of a frivolous, vexatious and/or malicious allegation the matter will be regarded as a serious disciplinary offence.

4 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 4.1 So far as possible, all allegations will be investigated in confidence. All those who are involved in the investigation of an allegation, including witnesses, representatives and persons providing information, evidence and/or advice, have a duty to maintain confidentiality.
- 4.2 However, for an allegation to be investigated fully, it may be necessary to disclose the identity of the person making the allegation (“the Complainant”) to the person who is the subject of the complaint (“the Respondent”). It may also be necessary to make certain disclosures to relevant members of Departmental staff. The Complainant will be advised before any such disclosure is made.
- 4.3 The Head of Department and the Faculty Director of Research will be informed of any allegations.

5 DEFINITIONS

‘Research misconduct’ is defined as, but not limited to, the following:

- a) Falsification - where a student intentionally changes information, or excludes information from their own sources or from pre-existing sources, to support or disprove a particular point, case or argument being made by the student, which has no basis in truth or fact, and cannot be substantiated by proof, i.e. through experimentation, results, calculation, analysis, reasoned argument, etc.
- b) Fabrication - where a student intentionally creates, invents or fabricates information (e.g. results, references, etc) to support or disprove a particular point or argument being made by the student, which has no basis in truth or fact, and cannot be substantiated by proof, i.e. through experimentation, results, calculation, analysis, reasoned argument, etc.
- c) Plagiarism - where a student intentionally takes the work of another/others, with the intention of passing it off as their own. It encompasses, but is not limited to:
- using existing published work of others, with deliberate or accidental omission of referencing, and using/presenting it as the student’s own,
 - copying published work, without appropriately presented paraphrasing and referencing,
 - copying words or ideas from others without giving credit,
 - using work previously submitted for another award, without correct referencing and acknowledgement,
 - taking another person's computer files/programs/designs/drawings, using and passing off the contents as the student’s own,

- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit,
- soliciting others, paid or otherwise, to write material for the student's use,
- copying the writings and results of another student,
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation.

The contents of a previously published research paper or papers based on the work and outcomes of the student's research programme that is/are included in the thesis that forms the basis for being considered for the research award being sought, or documentation to assist an application to transfer registration from MPhil to PhD, in itself, does not constitute plagiarism, providing that in the thesis or documentation it is appropriately presented and referenced in keeping with conventional academic norms.

- d) Misrepresentation - where a student intentionally misrepresents a position, case, information, data etc, having the aim of advancing or furthering a particular point, case, argument to their benefit.
- e) Ethical issues - where a student intentionally fails satisfactorily to address ethical issues that relate to their research, whether it be through failure to gain ethical approval through the relevant Research Ethics Committee, or misrepresenting a position to gain ethical approval to conduct their research, or failing to comply with any requirements or undertakings imposed in the course of obtaining ethical approval.
- f) Health and safety issues - where a student intentionally fails to adhere to relevant health and safety policies, guidance and good practice in conducting research, as well as engaging in practices that have a detrimental impact on the environment. Such actions will be considered a breach of the student's duty of care to themselves and/or to others as set out in the University Health & Safety Policy.
- g) Intellectual property issues - where a student intentionally uses the intellectual property of others, in whatever form it takes, without seeking the prior permission of the holder of such intellectual property to do so, and/or failing to acknowledge such in any material (written or otherwise) authored/prepared by the student.

The university may make use of technology to detect any of the foregoing categories where relevant.

6 SCALE OF OFFENCES

- 6.1 Category 1: This level of offence applies to cases where it is considered that any form of alleged misconduct set out in Section 5 has no discernible impact on any claims made by the student as to a contribution to knowledge produced, so that they gain minimal material advantage in progressing their research studies.

For example, in cases of alleged plagiarism, a student's work might contain significant 'lifting' of text and/or other material (verbatim) from a source or sources without correct attribution and/or significant instances of unreferenced paraphrasing; "significant" could refer to either the length of a section of plagiarised text and/or the frequency of the infringement.

Any repeat of a Category 1 offence will be treated as a Category 2 offence.

- 6.2 Category 2: This level of offence applies to cases where it is considered that any form of alleged misconduct set out in Section 5 has a minor impact on the student's claim as to originality and/or contribution to knowledge produced.

For example, inappropriate and deliberate manipulation of data so as to lend greater credence to any hypothesis being advanced by the student, measured in terms of the significance of the manipulation and its impact.

Any repeat of a Category 2 offence will be treated as a Category 3 offence.

- 6.3 Category 3: This level of offence applies to those students where it is considered that any of the forms of alleged research misconduct set out in Section 3 has a major impact on any claims made by the student as to originality and/or contribution to knowledge produced, with the intention of deliberately gaining a significant material advantage in progressing their research, e.g. forming the basis of making a case for transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD, forming an integral part of a thesis submitted for examination.

For example, in cases of the deliberate misrepresentation, falsification or fabrication of data, this level of misconduct is typified by the student deliberately presenting arguments from data that do not exist or have been processed beyond their validity, with the single purpose of advancing the student's key hypothesis.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH SUSPECTED CASES OF RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

7 REPORTING A SUSPECTED OFFENCE

- 7.1 Any reports of research misconduct must be reported to the appropriate Faculty Director of Research, or their nominee, in writing using the PRM1 form.
- 7.2 If the initial allegation is made verbally or in other written form, the Faculty Director of Research, or their nominee, will formally record the allegation on a PRM1 form, appending any additional written report.
- 7.3 An initial investigation of the allegation will be undertaken by the Faculty Research Misconduct Panel. On receipt of an allegation, the Faculty Director of Research, or their nominee, will appoint an appropriate Chair to progress the case.
- 7.4 If the student is undergoing a major assessment process (MPhil/PhD transfer or final examination), the Chair will liaise with the Training and Research Programmes Manager to determine the timeline for the investigation.
- 7.5 The student will be advised in writing within 5 working days of receipt of the PRM1 form that an allegation has been made and that the case will be investigated by the Faculty Research Misconduct Panel.
- 7.6 The Faculty Research Misconduct Panel should normally take place within 20 working days of the allegation being made.
- 7.7 The student will normally be given no less than 10 working days notification of the date of the meeting. The notice of the meeting will be accompanied by copies of all documentation to be used in consideration of the case and will confirm details of any suspension of assessment.
- 7.8 The student must provide a written statement either admitting or refuting the allegation and enclose any relevant research material and other documentation that they wish to be considered by the Faculty Research Misconduct Panel. This must be provided no later than 5 working days before the meeting date.
- 7.9 The student will also be informed that they may contact the Students' Union for advice and may be accompanied at the meeting by a friend/supporter of their choice.

8 FACULTY RESEARCH MISCONDUCT PANEL

8.1 Membership of the Faculty Research Misconduct Panel will comprise:

- A Chair appointed by the Faculty Director of Research
- Two experienced research academics – one from the student’s Faculty and the other from another Faculty within the University

No Panel member may be the supervisor of the student under investigation, or have had any prior involvement with the allegation being considered.

For the Panel to be quorate, the Chair and the two experienced research academics must be present at all meetings where the case is considered.

The Faculty will arrange for provision of secretarial support to the Faculty Research Misconduct Panel.

8.2 The student may be accompanied by a friend, from the Students’ Union, or otherwise. The accompanying person may not be a practicing solicitor or barrister.

8.3 The Panel may deal with the case in the student’s absence if the student fails to appear without reasonable explanation, or notifies in advance that they do not wish to appear. The Chair will have discretion as to what constitutes a ‘reasonable explanation’.

8.4 The initial purpose of the Faculty Research Misconduct Panel is to determine whether the alleged research misconduct has taken place. To achieve this the Panel will:

- Consider all the documentation submitted in relation to the allegation
- Interview the student

The Panel may also:

- Interview any or all of the student’s designated supervisors
- Interview the claimant(s) relating to their allegation of research misconduct
- Interview any witnesses to the misconduct or other interested third parties
- Make appropriate use of technology to help in detecting research misconduct

8.5 If the Panel considers that no research misconduct has taken place, the case will be dismissed and no record retained of the allegation.

8.6 If the Panel considers that, on the balance of probability, the student has engaged in research misconduct, the case will be considered proven and they will determine the scale of the offence in accordance with Section 6.

8.7 If, either in writing prior to, or at the meeting, the student admits to intentionally engaging in research misconduct, the case will be considered proven and the Panel will determine the scale of the offence in accordance with Section 6.

8.8 Following a proven case of research misconduct:

- where the scale of the offence is deemed to be Category 1 or 2, the Panel may apply one of the appropriate penalties in accordance with Section 10
- where the scale of the offence is deemed to be Category 3, the case will be referred to the University Research Student Misconduct Panel for further consideration

- 8.9 The outcome of the Panel will be formally communicated to the student within 10 working days of completion of the work of the Panel.
- 8.10 The appropriate pro forma (PRM2) is to be completed and a copy submitted to the Research and Enterprise Training Institute.

9 UNIVERSITY RESEARCH STUDENT MISCONDUCT PANEL

9.1 A meeting of the University Research Student Misconduct Panel will be arranged at the earliest opportunity after the referral from the Faculty Research Misconduct Panel and normally within the 20 working days.

9.2 Membership of the University Research Student Misconduct Panel will comprise:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), or nominee - Chair
- Head of Research & Enterprise Training Institute
- Director of Research of student's home Faculty
- Students' Union Representative

No Panel member may be the supervisor of the student under investigation, or have had any prior involvement with the allegation being considered.

For the Panel to be quorate, the Panel must include a Chair, the Director of Research and a Student's Union representative.

The Research & Enterprise Training Institute will arrange for provision of secretarial support to the University Research Student Misconduct Panel.

9.3 The Faculty Postgraduate Research Misconduct Panel must provide the Secretary with a copy of the notes from the Faculty Postgraduate Research Misconduct Panel within 5 working days of the referral.

9.4 The student may be accompanied by a friend, from the Students' Union, or otherwise. The accompanying person may not be a practicing solicitor or barrister. The student should provide the name of the person accompanying them to the Secretary no later than two working days before the meeting.

9.5 The Panel may deal with the case in the student's absence if the student fails to appear without reasonable explanation, or notifies in advance that they do not wish to appear. The Chair will have discretion as to what constitutes a 'reasonable explanation'.

9.6 The University Research Student Misconduct Panel will consider cases deemed to be Major by the Faculty Postgraduate Research Misconduct Panel. In its deliberations the Panel will:

- Review all material submitted by the Faculty Postgraduate Research Misconduct Panel
- Interview the student

The Panel may also interview:

- the Claimant who raised the allegation
- any other staff member relevant to the case
- the Chair of the Faculty Postgraduate Research Misconduct Panel

9.7 Following its considerations of the case the Panel may:

- a) Uphold the view that there is a proven case of Major misconduct, and apply the appropriate penalty in accordance with Section 10; or
- b) Determine that there is a proven case of misconduct at a lower level i.e. Moderate or Minor, and apply the appropriate penalty in accordance with Section 10

9.8 The appropriate pro forma (PRM3) is to be completed and a copy submitted to the Research and Enterprise Training Institute.

9.9 The student will be informed of the outcome within 10 working days of the completion of the work of the Committee in relation to the case.

10 PENALTIES

10.1 In deciding the penalties available the Faculty Postgraduate Research Misconduct Panel and University Research Student Misconduct Panel shall assess the seriousness of the offence using the following criteria:

- (a) Premeditation
- (b) Scale
- (c) Previous history
- (d) Theft, falsification and fabrication
- (e) Miscellaneous

10.2 Other relevant factors pertinent to individual cases, including extenuating circumstances or coercion may be taken into account in the determination of the penalty.

10.3 One or a combination of the range of penalties detailed in [Appendix A](#) may be imposed by the Faculty Research Misconduct Panel and the University Research Student Misconduct Panel in cases where it is considered the student has engaged in research misconduct.

11 ABSENCE OF STUDENT

If a student suspected of research misconduct is absent (e.g. abroad) at any stage of the process, the Chair of the relevant Panel will decide whether the process may be delayed until the student is available. In cases where the student is not able to attend the university within a reasonable period of time, the process may proceed in their absence, but an opportunity must be provided for the student to present their case through the submission of a written statement. No other person may attend in place of the student to present the case of the student.

12 RIGHT OF APPEAL

Where a research misconduct allegation is upheld, the student will have the right of appeal against the outcome in accordance with the provisions of the regulations set out in the *Academic Appeal Policy and Procedure for Research Awards*.

13 REPORTING

In cases of proven research misconduct:

- Such misconduct must be reported within the statistical information contained in relevant annual Faculty Research Degrees Committee Reports, and it is the responsibility of the Committee Chair and Secretary to ensure this happens;
- Where it is considered appropriate, the University bears the responsibility of informing relevant external governmental, charitable, private and commercial organisations that

such research misconduct has occurred, e.g. publishers, sponsors, supporting funding and collaborating bodies.

14 RIGHT TO REVISIT AN ALLEGATION OF RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

The University reserves the right to reopen any case relating to research misconduct where new information becomes available that is considered to substantiate the original allegation of such misconduct.

15 RESCINDING AN AWARD

- 15.1 Should allegations of research misconduct relating to the contents of a thesis arise after a final research award has been made by the University, the University reserves the right to rescind an award where it is considered that a case for such misconduct is proven.
- 15.2 The University will attempt to locate the author of the thesis to participate in the investigative process relating to such an allegation. If balance of evidence indicates that such an offence is likely to have occurred, and has materially benefitted the author in gaining their award, the award may be rescinded in the absence of the author.
- 15.3 The university reserves the right to make a statement on the matter in public media outlets. Whilst any such matters are being investigated, the thesis on which the award is based will be removed from the University's academic literature archive (GALA), and, where appropriate, also the University Library. Should the outcome of the investigative process result in the award being rescinded, the thesis will remain removed from public view from both GALA, the University Library and the British Library.
- 15.4 Any allegation of research misconduct arising under such circumstances will be considered by the University Research Student Research Misconduct Panel with the inclusion of an additional member external to the university with significant subject expertise in the area corresponding to the thesis under scrutiny.

16. ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Free independent advice and advocacy is available from the University of Greenwich Students' Union, GK Unions Advice Service and the UK Research Integrity Office.

The University of Greenwich Students' Union:

Advice line: 020 8331 8267

Email: suadvice@gre.ac.uk

Web: www.suug.co.uk/welfare

Book an appointment online: <https://www.greenwichsu.co.uk/advice>

Medway-based students can contact the GK Unions Advice Service:

Advice line: 01634 88 88 82

Email: advice@gkunions.co.uk

Web: www.gkunions.co.uk/advice

UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)

Web: <http://ukrio.org/get-advice-from-ukrio/>

APPENDIX A: PENALTIES FOR ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT IN RESEARCH DEGREES

ALLEGATION ARISING *BEFORE* SUBMISSION OF TRANSFER (RDA2) OR EXAMINATION (RDA6a/b) APPLICATION

Offence Category	Penalty	Awarding Authority ¹	Reporting
Cat 1	No penalty. Feedback provided and student referred to relevant source/s of support or training.	FRMP	
	Student required to successfully complete an online Research Integrity course. Failure to complete within set deadline will be considered as a further Category 1 offence.		
	Opportunity to revise work. Progression delayed until improved work has been developed and submitted.		
Cat 2	Opportunity to revise work. Progression delayed until improved work has been developed and submitted.	FRMP / URMP	
	Withdrawal or correction of pending or published abstracts and papers emanating from the research in question.		
	Registration interrupted until student has successfully completed an online Research Integrity course.		
Cat 3	Withdrawal of funding.	URMP	
	Maximum award of MPhil.		
	Termination of registration. The decision to withhold any exit award will also form part of the Panel's outcome.		

ALLEGATION ARISING *AFTER* SUBMISSION OF TRANSFER (RDA2) OR EXAMINATION (RDA6a/b) APPLICATION

Offence Category	Penalty	Authority awarding penalty	Reporting
Cat 1	No penalty. Feedback provided and student referred to relevant source/s of support or training.	FRMP	
	Student required to successfully complete an online Research Integrity course. Failure to complete within set deadline will be considered as a further Category 1 offence.		
	Resubmission of all or part of transfer report/thesis. Progression delayed until improved work has been developed and submitted.		
Cat 2	Revise the work and resubmit as a referral with or without oral examination. The resubmitted work will be the final opportunity for reassessment.	FRMP / URMP	
	Opportunity to revise the transfer report/thesis for a lesser award.		
Cat 3	No opportunity for revision. Reassessment of the submitted work with the material in question discounted.	URMP	
	Maximum award of MPhil / not permitted to transfer to PhD.		
	Failure of award and termination of registration.		

¹ FRMP – Faculty Research Misconduct Panel
URMP – University Research Misconduct Panel