

6H - Academic Offences: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards

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1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy and procedure is intended for Bournemouth University (BU) staff and students (including those enrolled on programmes delivered at academic partners). It outlines the principles the University applies to the process of suspected and actual academic offences committed within taught awards and credit bearing units.
- 1.2 Suspected cases of a serious breach of research ethics, including those which involve undergraduate or postgraduate taught students fall within the scope of *6M – Academic Misconduct in Academic Research: Policy and Procedure*. Where suspected cases involve an academic offence and a serious breach of research ethics, advice may be sought from Academic Quality as to which policy and procedure is to be followed or whether the case should be referred to *11K – Student Disciplinary: Procedure*. Please also refer to *11L – Third Party Involvement: Procedure* where a third party is involved with an academic offence.
- 1.3 This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with the documents listed in Section 3 below.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 **Students** are responsible for familiarising themselves with this Policy and Procedure and students must act in accordance with it. It is the responsibility of students to seek clarification if necessary.
- 2.2 **Senate** approves new policies or amendments to existing policies relating to academic offences.

2.3 **Academic Standards and Education Committee (ASEC)** considers the effectiveness of the arrangements for academic offences and recommends changes to current policy to Senate. ASEC will approve new and revised procedures by exception.

2.4 **Faculties** are responsible for ensuring students are informed of the principles of this policy and procedure and should endeavour to ensure students are made aware of the implications of committing academic offences and their responsibilities in relation to academic practice.

Faculty staff are also responsible for ensuring that procedural guidance is adhered to in relation to the reporting of and consideration of suspected offences. Faculties formally investigate, record and monitor suspected Academic Offences which fall under a minor or major Faculty Academic Offence. It is the responsibility of programme teams to frame assessment requirements and procedures in a clear and unambiguous manner to assist in the prevention of potential academic offences.

Faculties which host students via academic partnership arrangements are responsible for applying the steps outlined in this policy and procedure for these students. In these cases Faculties are expected to liaise directly with relevant staff members at the academic partner in relation to the case.

2.5 **Academic Quality** will provide guidance and support to faculties in implementing this policy and procedure and will advise on case specific matters where necessary. Academic Quality are also responsible for recording and monitoring suspected academic offences that are determined as major University Offences, and for administering the University level academic offences process and providing advice to University Academic Offences Boards.

3. LINKS TO OTHER BU DOCUMENTS

3.1 Other documents with direct relevance to this one are:

- [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations](#):
- [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations: Undergraduate Programmes](#)
- [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations: Postgraduate Taught Programmes](#)
- [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations: Foundation Degree Programmes](#)
- [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations: Higher National Programmes](#)
- [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations: Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma Programmes](#)
- [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations: Integrated Masters Programmes](#)
- [6J - Exceptional Circumstances including Extensions: Policy and Procedure](#)
- [6M - Misconduct in Academic Research: Policy and Procedure](#)
- [11H - Fitness to Practise: Procedure](#)
- [11J - Support to Study: Policy and Procedure](#)
- [11K - Student Disciplinary: Procedure](#)
- [11L - Third Party Involvement: Procedure](#)
- Information on [citing references](#) including the BU Guide to Citation in the Harvard style.
- Information on [avoiding academic offences](#).
- [Important Information \(Student-facing Policies and Procedures\)](#)

Policy

4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

4.1 In entering higher education, students commit themselves to a process of becoming recognised by society as having achieved a certain level of learning. A student who misleads society as to the authenticity of this achievement is academically dishonest not only to those on whom the deception is practised, but also to themselves i.e. the student's achievement was based on a false claim and/or had been obtained in an unethical way.

4.2 Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and it is important that the duties and rights of the Academic community are clearly defined and effectively communicated. All academic

offences are serious and must be treated accordingly. Where an offence is a second or subsequent offence, or compounded by lying or deception, or otherwise aggravated, a more stringent penalty should be imposed. This may include the referral of the case to the University's *11K- Student Disciplinary Procedure*, *11J- Support to Study: Policy and Procedure* or *11H - Fitness to Practise: Procedure*.

All suspected cases of academic offences will be considered in a timely fashion to allow the outcome to be confirmed and any action taken in line with the university's assessment regulations as outlined in *6A- Standard Assessment Regulations*.

- 4.3 Procedures should facilitate early deterrence, identification and warning of the consequences of academic offences. Student Handbooks should include a warning that academic offences are serious matters which can, in extreme cases, lead to a decision that the student be excluded from the University, or to the revocation of an award, even after the recommendation of the Assessment Board.
- 4.4 In order to prevent plagiarism, protect the intellectual property of both the University and its students the University may use plagiarism detection software or other technology as appropriate.

Consideration of apparent misdemeanours in **formative assessment** falls outside the scope of this Policy. However, the student should be counselled by the relevant Unit Leader and advised that the misdemeanour could potentially lead to an academic offence at the summative assessment stage. Reference to the potential offence should be made in any student feedback on the work in question and an advice and guidance sheet should be issued to the student at that stage (see [Appendix 9](#), Guide to Good Academic Practice).

6H Academic Offences Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards is an internal procedure and is not a legal process. The University strongly advises students to use the services of the SUBU Advice team who are independent from the University and have a full understanding of the university's policies and procedures.

The University is committed to the fair and equal treatment of all individuals regardless of gender, age, disability, colour, race, ethnic or national origin, socio-economic group, sexual orientation, marital status, family responsibilities, religious or political beliefs.

5. STUDENT RIGHTS

- 5.1 Students under investigation should be given every opportunity to seek advice, for example from SUBU Advice. Students should be informed of the full extent of any allegations in advance of the Academic Offences Panel or Board that they are invited to attend. This should include provision of evidence considered at any previous relevant meetings (whether the student was present or not) and the notes of those meetings. Students also have the right to appeal against matters of procedural irregularity or mal-administration linked to the academic offence process.

6. DEFINITIONS

- 6.1.1 An academic offence may be defined as any attempt by a student, or any attempt by an individual to aid a student, to gain an unfair advantage in any assessment (including an assessment of practice or an assessment in practice) by deception or fraudulent means. Academic offences involving fraud, e.g. by electronic means, may not be unit-specific and some may fall within the scope of the *Student Disciplinary Procedure*. Additionally, section 1.2 above refers to the handling of suspected cases of a serious breach of research ethics.
- 6.1.2 The definition of an academic offence given in section 6.1.1 assumes dishonest intent. A distinction should be drawn between such dishonest intent and a lack of competence on the part of a student; for example, the use of extensive quotations (even if references are cited)

so that little written content is the work of the student. Academic failings of this kind should be addressed, and appropriately penalised, through the application of assessment criteria (using the University's Generic Assessment Criteria as normative) in the marking process. Written feedback should indicate clearly the shortcomings and ways in which the student must address them.

6.1.3 Further information relating to how the University categorises and understands different forms of Academic Offence can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

6.2 Academic offences are determined based on the severity of the offence either as **minor** or **major**. Additionally, where an offence is a second or subsequent offence, or compounded by lying or deception, or otherwise aggravated, a more stringent penalty may be imposed as outlined in [Appendix 3](#) Tariff of penalties.

A student suspected of committing a minor academic offence will automatically be referred for action under the major academic offences procedure if the student has previously been found to have committed any academic offence or is suspected of an offence in more than one assessed element of study.

Where a student is suspected of committing academic offences relating to several pieces of assessment (either for the same unit or for different units) which are submitted at approximately the same time this may be approached as a first offence in the case where the student has not yet had an opportunity to reflect on any outcome of an Academic Offences Panel or Board.

6.3 The following factors will be taken into consideration when determining whether a suspected offence should be treated as minor or major;

- ***The extent of the academic offence.*** For example, a piece of work which has 31% or more of unreferenced material within it will be regarded as a major academic offence, whereas limited failure to acknowledge sources or citation within a piece of work may be regarded as a minor academic offence. *The relative contribution of the assessment to the overall student profile is not a relevant issue.* For example, cheating will not be condoned simply because the weighting of the assessment is not significant in terms of the overall credits available.
- ***The extent of premeditated intention to deceive*** or otherwise gain advantage through deception or fraudulent means. For example, the evidence may suggest that the student has been sophisticated in their use of unattributed material, attempting to change minor aspects of plagiarised text to give the impression that it is their own work.

6.4 Responsibilities of the Assessment Board

6.4.1 Where an academic offence is suspected, the Assessment Board should not come to a decision on the student's results until the investigation has been completed in accordance with this Policy. This includes provision for;

- i the allegation to be substantiated;
- ii the student's right to respond to the allegation before their assessment results are determined;
- iii the outcome of the investigation to be reported to the Assessment Board;
- iv the Assessment Board to confirm the outcome of the investigation, and to use it in its determination of the student's results in accordance with the University's assessment regulations;
- v for the referral of more serious offences to the University's *Student Disciplinary Procedure*.

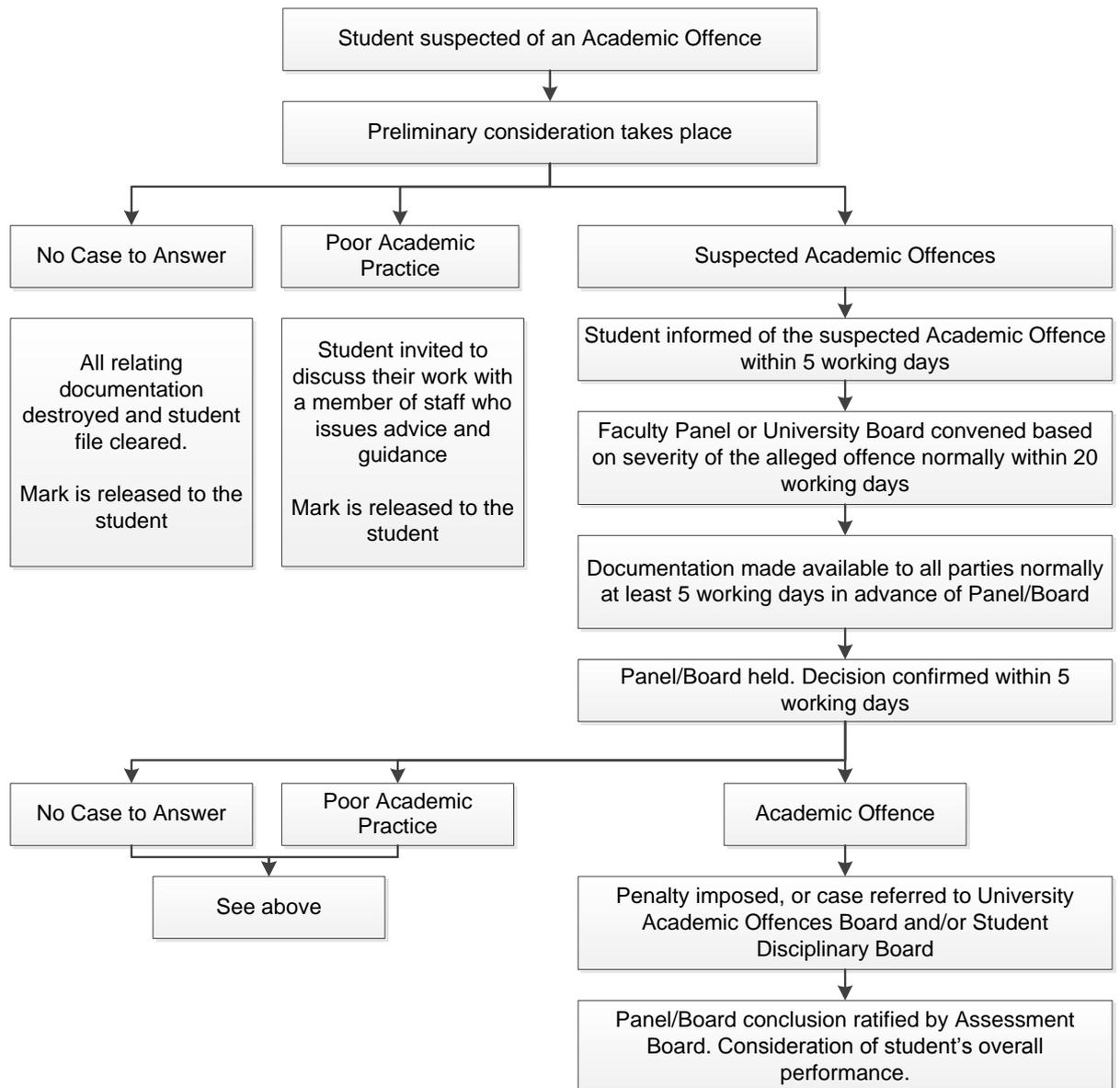
The outcome of any investigation carried out in accordance with this Policy and Procedure will be reported to the Assessment Board which will honour the outcome and will act in accordance with the relevant Assessment Regulations.

6.4.2 Evidence which comes to light after the recommendation of the Assessment Board should be considered initially and promptly in accordance with this policy. At the conclusion of the process, External Examiners should be informed of any decision that materially affects the original recommendation of the Assessment Board.

Procedure

7. APPLICATION

7.1 The diagram below gives an overview of the academic offences process:



Programme teams are responsible for identifying suspected instances of academic offences and for collating supporting evidence.

Apart from any initial discussions between the student and their Unit Leader or Administrator informing them that their work is still under consideration by internal markers, all direct contact with the student under suspicion of an academic offence should be formal and recorded. The

mark and the work should not be released to the student until the suspected academic offence has been investigated.

All formal proceedings will be recorded within a written set of minutes.

7.2 As soon as an academic offence is suspected the evidence will be given preliminary consideration by the Unit Leader/internal marker(s), the Programme Leader and a representative of the Faculty Executive who shall be a senior member of the Faculty's academic staff. This meeting will be recorded via a set of formal minutes, normally written by a member of the programme support team. The purpose of the preliminary consideration is to agree the most appropriate course of action. The student does not attend the preliminary stage meeting.

7.3 The preliminary consideration will have one of the following outcomes:-

- i there is **no case to answer**;
- ii the student has shown **poor academic practice** in a piece of work;
- iii an **academic offence** may have occurred and requires further investigation before it is brought to the attention of an Academic Offences Panel/Board. An academic offence may have occurred and should be brought to the attention of an Academic Offences Panel/Board.

Students will not normally be informed that they have been suspected of an offence until after the preliminary consideration is complete. As outlined in 7.1, students may be informed that their work is still under consideration by internal markers. The mark and the work will not be released to the student until the suspected academic offence has been investigated.

7.4 Evidence considered at the preliminary meeting should be as comprehensive as possible. A suspected academic offence may have come to light through a variety of means including plagiarism detection software. Where this is the case, additional supporting evidence should be sourced to support this. Evidence should never be solely based on plagiarism detection software. For further information relating to the collation of evidence please refer to [Appendix 4](#).

7.5 There may be exceptional instances where further evidence is required in order to enable the decision as to whether to progress under this Policy. In such exceptional instances, a student may be called upon and invited to attend a meeting to inform a preliminary investigation. In such cases the student must be briefed in advance that concerns have been raised regarding a particular piece of work.

7.6 Where the preliminary consideration finds there is no case to answer, all documentation relating to the case including the formal minutes of the preliminary consideration must be removed from the student file and destroyed and the agreed mark and feedback released to the student within appropriate timescales. The University will record the number of cases with 'no case to answer' outcomes but specific student details must not be included. This information will be reported annually to Academic Quality and utilised to inform practice moving forward.

7.7 Where the preliminary consideration finds that the student may have shown poor academic practice in a piece of work, the student will be informed of this in writing and be invited to discuss this with an appropriate member of academic staff at the earliest possible opportunity. The student should be issued with appropriate advice and guidance as to how to prevent a recurrence and a record of this will be kept on the student file. In such cases, no specified penalty will be applied but the overall mark awarded will take into account normal assessment criteria and the agreed mark and feedback released to the student within appropriate timescales.

- 7.8 Where the preliminary consideration concludes there is evidence to indicate that an academic offence may have occurred, the representative of Faculty Executive shall decide on the appropriate course of action using [Appendix 2](#).

The Faculty will inform the student in writing of the outcome of the preliminary consideration normally **within 5 working days** and the matter shall be remitted to the Faculty Academic Offences Panel or University Academic Offences Board as appropriate

- 7.9 Where the outcome of the preliminary consideration is that an academic offence may have occurred the Faculty Panel or University Board will be convened within 20 working days. Programme teams are required to submit all supporting evidence to allow this deadline to be met. Students will normally be notified at least 10 working days before the Panel or Board. At least five days before the Panel or Board the student under suspicion of an academic offence will be informed in writing of the nature of the allegations and be provided with the evidence to be considered, along with a copy of this policy and procedure.

7.10 Faculty Academic Offences Panel

- 7.10.1 The purpose of the Faculty Academic Offences Panel is to deliberate on cases of suspected minor or major Faculty academic offences, taking into consideration all evidence presented by the programme team. The Panel will decide if, based on the evidence and information provided by the programme team and the student, an Academic Offence has been committed.

- 7.10.2 Faculty Academic Offences Panels will run in accordance with the Order of proceedings set out in [Appendix 5](#). Documentation, including evidence will be provided in accordance with the guidance provided in [Appendix 6](#). Its membership shall be as follows:

- A senior member of academic staff from the Faculty (appointed at the discretion of the Deputy Dean Education and Professional Practice) who shall serve as Chair;
- An independent member of the academic staff of the Faculty;
- An independent member drawn from the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG).

The Faculty will provide secretarial support.

- 7.10.3 To avoid potential conflicts of interest, members of the Faculty Academic Offences Panel should not have had previous involvement with consideration of the suspected offence brought before the Panel.

- 7.10.4 Where the suspected offence is proven, the Faculty Academic Offences Panel shall judge the seriousness of the offence, and decide what sanction should be applied, as appropriate to the case, and with reference to [Appendix 3](#), Tariff of Penalties.

The Panel may also find there is no case to answer or that poor academic practice is evident and act in accordance with sections 7.3 - 7.4 above.

7.11 University Academic Offences Board

- 7.11.1 The purpose of the University Academic Offences Board is to deliberate on cases of suspected major University academic offences, taking into consideration all evidence presented by the Programme team. The Board will decide if, based on the evidence and information provided by the Programme team and the student, an Academic Offence has been committed.

- 7.11.2 University Academic Offences Boards will run in accordance with the Order of proceedings set out in [Appendix 5](#). Documentation, including evidence will be provided in accordance with the Guidance provided in [Appendix 6](#). Its membership shall be as follows:

- Member of University Executive Team or nominee to serve as Chair;

- An academic with relevant experience, normally drawn from QAEG;
- An elected member of the Students' Union.

Academic Quality will provide secretarial support.

- 7.11.3 Where the suspected case is proven, the University Academic Offences Board shall judge the seriousness of the offence, and decide what sanction should be applied, as appropriate to the case, and with reference to [Appendix 3](#). The Board reserves the right to exercise discretion where cases are evidenced to be less serious than first indicated (e.g. minor) and may apply penalties from the full range available if deemed appropriate.
- 7.11.4 Where the Board finds that there is no case to answer or that poor academic practice is evident it will act in accordance with sections 7.6 – 7.7 above.
- 7.12 The relevant Programme Leader and Unit Leader are expected to present the case for consideration. In the event that the Programme Leader is unavailable, a suitable academic representative who is fully briefed on the case may represent the Programme team. The Panel or Board will normally proceed as scheduled if the academic member of staff representing the Programme team fails to attend, with or without prior notification.

8. STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT AN ACADEMIC OFFENCES PANEL/BOARD

- 8.1 Students are expected to attend the Panel or Board and will be invited by the relevant Faculty/ Academic Quality staff member, normally ten working days before the Panel or Board will take place.

Students may be accompanied by a friend or representative (not acting in a legal capacity nor who is an employee of the University). Please refer to *11L – Third Party Involvement: Procedure* for further details.

- 8.2 If, for exceptional reasons the student is unable to attend the Panel or Board, and notifies the Panel or Board at least 5 working days in advance, they may be represented by a member of SUBU Advice. In this instance, the Panel or Board will proceed as normal basing its considerations on the evidence available.
- 8.3 If a student fails to attend a meeting of the Panel or Board without notifying the Panel or Board in advance, the meeting will proceed as normal, provided that the Panel or Board members are satisfied that every reasonable effort has been made to contact the student and to give them the opportunity to attend.

In cases involving more than one student, acting in accordance with the principles of this policy and procedure the Panel or Board (with advice from Academic Quality) will decide on the most appropriate way to conduct the hearing and how potential outcome(s) may affect the whole group or individuals.

- 8.4 Students are encouraged to be open and honest and should be aware that the formal procedure will be reduced in length and complexity if the facts are known and agreed at an early stage. Where a student admits to the suspected academic offence before the meeting, the meeting will still go ahead.

Students are given an opportunity to provide a written statement and encouraged to seek advice from SUBU Advice. Any direct contact with academic staff involved in the consideration of the alleged academic offence should be formal and recorded.

Exceptional Circumstances

- 8.5 The written statement described in section 8.4 may be supported by evidence of exceptional circumstances. However, Students are not required to submit an exceptional circumstances claim to the Panel or Board; instead students should provide details of the exceptional

circumstance in the form of a written explanation supported by appropriate, independently verified medical or other appropriate documentary evidence. Any costs incurred in supplying evidence are the student's responsibility.

- 8.6 In accordance with *6J – Exceptional Circumstances Including Extensions: Policy and Procedure*: if a student has not informed the University of their circumstances at the appropriate time (i.e. via extension request, Assessment Board consideration or in advance of or at an Academic Offences Panel or Board hearing) the circumstances will not be considered unless the student provides evidence of valid reasons for not doing so previously.
- 8.7 Exceptional circumstances will not be considered grounds for excusing an academic offence. However, the Panel or Board may take the circumstances into account and use discretion if evidence demonstrates that the student's judgement at the time of the alleged offence would have been severely impaired due to the circumstances. It is for the Panel or Board to decide if the exceptional circumstances are deemed to have severely impacted a student's judgement.

9. OUTCOMES AND PENALTIES

- 9.1 Penalties 1-6 in [Appendix 3](#) reflect incrementally the seriousness of the offence. In considering which penalty to impose, the Panel or Board will take into consideration the seriousness of the offence.
- 9.2 The Faculty Academic Offences Panel may choose minor or major penalties 1-4 in [Appendix 3](#). They may also, if deemed necessary, refer the case to the University Academic Offences Board.
- 9.3 When the University Academic Offences Board concludes that an academic offence has been committed, it may stipulate any penalty (1-6) in [Appendix 3](#).
- 9.4 In exceptional cases, the Panel or Board may conclude that an academic offence has been committed by the student(s), but the penalties within [Appendix 3](#) may not be appropriate for the circumstance surrounding the offence. In such situations, the Panel or Board should use its discretion and acting within the principles of this Policy and Procedure and in line with the University's general Assessment Regulation principles, stipulate an outcome to best suit the situation.
- 9.5 Where an allegation of an academic offence, if found to be proven, would bring about concerns for fitness to practise, the case will be referred directly to the procedure outlined in *11H - Fitness to Practise: Procedure*. Referrals to the University's *11K- Student Disciplinary Procedure* and *11J - Support to Study: Policy and Procedure* will also be made as appropriate.
- 9.6 The Panel or Board's decision will be passed to the Assessment Board for ratification and for inclusion in its recommendations. The Panel or Board's decision may not be overturned by the Assessment Board and should be taken as a given when considering the student's profile of marks.
- 9.7 The Assessment Board will include all units failed as a result of the Academic Offences Panel or Board's decision in its consideration of the student's overall performance according to the University's assessment regulations. Reassessment(s) shall only be carried out once the Assessment Board has met and where the student's overall profile and the assessment regulations permit the student such a reassessment.
- 9.8 All students who are found guilty of a minor or major academic offence, or have been found to have shown poor academic practice in their work, will be referred to the learning resource information held in [Appendix 9](#) - Student Learning Guide.

10. APPEAL

- 10.1 The decisions of the Faculty Academic Offences Panel and the University Academic Offences Board are considered to be academic judgement against which students may not appeal.

Appeals against the outcomes of a Panel or Board may only be lodged on the following grounds:

- there has been a material irregularity or significant administrative error in the application of the Academic Offences procedure;
- the consideration of the academic offence was not conducted in accordance with the regulations for the programme.

- 10.2 Students who wish to appeal must provide full details including evidence to support the claim in writing within 10 working days of official notification of the outcome of the Faculty/University Academic Offences Panel/Board. Appeals against the decision of the Academic Offences Panel or Board should be made directly to Academic Quality via the appeals@bournemouth.ac.uk email address.

- 10.3 A member of the Academic Quality team will consider the information submitted and confirm if the appeal is deemed eligible.

Students will be informed as promptly as possible if their appeal is not deemed eligible and the reasons for this will be outlined.

If there appears to be valid grounds for the appeal, the decision of the Faculty/University Academic Offences Panel/Board will not be overturned, but the offence may be referred for a re-hearing. Should a re-hearing be required, a new Panel/Board will be convened with a membership not including any of those on the original Panel/Board.

- 10.4 Academic Quality will send the student a *Completion of Procedures* letter when all internal Bournemouth University procedures have been exhausted.

- 10.5 If the student remains dissatisfied after exhausting the University appeals process outlined in 10.1 – 10.3 above, they may request a review from the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education](#). Contact details for the Independent Adjudicator are:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator,
Second Floor, Abbey Gate, 57-75 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AB
Tel: 0118 959 9813
Email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

General

11. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

- 11.1 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2018)
- 11.2 This document has been mapped against the requirements outlined in the *Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making at Bournemouth University* guidelines.
- 11.3 The University will seek to develop a body of case-law, which will provide guidance and precedents that may be used by Academic Offences Panels and Assessment Boards, in pursuit of consistent and equitable practice across Faculties.

12. APPENDICES

[Appendix 1](#) – Further Examples and Categorisation of Academic Offences

[Appendix 2](#) - Responsibility for resolving academic offences by occurrence and level

[Appendix 3](#) - Tariff of penalties

[Appendix 4](#) - Guidance on the provision of evidence

[Appendix 5](#) - Panel and Board Order of Proceedings

[Appendix 6](#) - Panel and Board Documentation requirements and minuting convention

[Appendix 7](#) - Additional guidance for cases where a witness is called

[Appendix 8](#) - Student Learning Guide

[Appendix 9](#) - Guide to good Academic Practice