Academic Offences Policy

Academic Offences Policy
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1. Introduction

1.1 Academic offences occur when activity is undertaken which could confer an unfair advantage to any student(s) in assessment.

1.2 The College reserves the right to apply these regulations in cases where an examination or academic offence is identified after a student has left the College. This may lead to a decision to revoke the award made to the former student.

1.3 This policy applies to:

- summative assessments;
- examinations or tests;
- the satisfactory completion of CPD activity;
- the marking of a dissertation/project.

2. Taught Module Offences

2.1 The College recognises the following (including any attempt to carry out the actions described) as academic offences, regardless of intent:

- Plagiarism, which is copying or paraphrasing of other people's work or ideas into a submitted assessment without full acknowledgement.

- Collusion, which is unauthorised collaboration of students (or others) in producing a submitted assessment. The offence of collusion occurs if a student copies any part of another student's work, or allows their own work to be copied. Collusion also occurs if other people contribute significantly to work that a student submits as their own.

- Ghost writing, which occurs when another person or people are commissioned or otherwise engaged to undertake an assessment, totally or in part, and the assessment is submitted as the student's own work.

- Misrepresenting or fabricating the outcomes and results of research, investigations, or experiments.

- Making false declarations in an attempt to obtain special consideration in assessment. Examples include falsely claiming a need for modified assessment provision or making false extenuating circumstances claims.

- The inclusion in an assessment (other than an examination or test) of material which is identical or substantially similar to material which has already been submitted for any other assessment within the College.

- Persuading or attempting to persuade another member of the College or partner institution to participate, in any way, in actions which would be in breach of these regulations.

- Being party to any arrangement which would be a breach of these regulations.

- Any other activity which could confer an unfair advantage to any student(s) in assessment.

3. Examination and Test Offences

3.1 The College recognises the following, including any attempt to carry out the actions, as examination offences, regardless of intent:

- Possessing or using in an examination or test any crib sheet, notes, books, paper, mobile phone, smart watch or electronic device of any kind other than those permitted in the rubric of the examination paper. The offence is determined by possession of the material and does not depend on whether there was an intention to use them.

- Obtaining access to unseen examination or test material prior to the start of the examination/test.

- Failing to comply with the legitimate instructions of an invigilator or examiner.

- Removing from an examination or test any script, paper, working notes or other official stationery, whether or not completed, or any electronic records provided as part of the examination unless specifically authorised by an invigilator or examiner.

- Being party to any arrangement where a person fraudulently represents, or intends to represent, a candidate in an examination or test.

- Communicating with another student or third party, other than an invigilator or examiner, whilst in the examination/test room.

- Copying the work of another student, whether by overlooking their work, asking them for information, or by any other means, or knowingly allowing their own work to be copied.

- Making false declarations in an attempt to obtain either modified assessment provisions or special consideration.

- Attempting to persuade another member of the College (student, staff, or invigilator) to participate in any actions which would be in breach of these regulations.

- Being party to any arrangement which would constitute a breach of these regulations.

- Undertaking any other activity which could confer an unfair advantage to any candidate(s) taking an examination or test.

4. Academic Offences Panel

4.1 All cases of alleged academic offence will be considered by the College Academic Offences Panel. The composition of the Panel will be:

- Chair (Vice-Rector (Academic) or Academic Registrar.

- Two academic members (nominated by the Academic Offences Panel Chair. Members must be independent of the module on which the offence is alleged to have taken). For dissertation/project module cases, the academic members of the Panel should have experience of research supervision and examination.

4.2 The Panel will be considered quorate provided that one academic staff member is present, in addition to the Chair. The Head of Student and Programme Services (or their nominee) should also attend in an advisory capacity and to take notes. All members of the Panel will have equal voting rights. A decision will be taken based on the majority vote wherever possible. When required, the Chair shall have the deciding vote.

4.3 If the Chair of the Academic Offences Panel meeting invites a subject expert to advise the Panel and the adviser is employed by MLA College, the adviser should not have taught the student or been involved in the supervision of the student in the case of dissertation/project students. The adviser must also not take part in the Panel's final decision making.

4.4 On reaching a decision on which penalty to apply, the Panel will consider and record:

- The extent of the advantage gained by the offence, had it not been detected.
- The severity of the offence.
- The student's academic stage, in relation to the College's expectations about knowledge of good academic practice and personal responsibility.
- The number of previous offences. Second and subsequent offences should incur a penalty of at least one step above that appropriate for a first offence of the same character.

4.5 The College reserves the right to refer any case directly to the Rector or Principal to decide whether immediate suspension or referral to a Student Wellbeing Review is required.

4.6 In all cases where an allegation is substantiated, the College will direct the student to guidance and support to avoid repeat offences.

5. Academic Offences Penalties

5.1 The possible penalties for offences in taught modules, examinations and tests are as follows:

- The offence is recorded on the student's record but there will be no academic penalty imposed. The offence may be taken into account by future Panels when determining the penalty for any future offences.
- The mark for the component be capped at the pass mark. This penalty can only be applied if the standard of the work is deemed to be worthy of the capped after the material subject to the offence is discounted.
- A mark of zero will be recorded for the component.
- A mark of zero will be recorded for the element.
- A mark of zero will be recorded for the module.
- The final aggregate mark for the programme will be reduced by 10%.
- The student is required to resubmit the assessment or repeat the module, with the award of generic credit only.

- A mark of zero be recorded for the module of which the assessment formed a part, the student is barred from taking the module again and must withdraw from the programme

5.2 The Panel is able to impose a more severe penalty than that immediately suggested by the list above, provided that the context and rationale for that penalty is clear and documented.

5.3 **AMBeR Tariff Points and Penalties -** AMBeR - Academic Misconduct Benchmarking Research Project - produced a Plagiarism Reference Tariff in conjunction with and in consultation with other UK HE organisations and universities, to clearly establish a set of appropriate penalties for plagiarism that could be more fairly applied by institutions across the sector. This is commonly referred to as the AMBeR Tariff.

5.4 In addition to cases of plagiarism in written work, MLA College uses the AMBeR Tariff to assign points to all confirmed cases of academic misconduct, to apply appropriate disciplinary penalties.

5.5 The AMBeR Tariff requires that points be assigned based on the following criteria:

History

▪ 1st Time - 100 points
▪ 2nd Time - 150 points
▪ 3rd/+ Time - 200 points

Amount / Extent

▪ Below 5% AND less than two sentences - 80 points
▪ As above but with critical aspects* plagiarised – 105 points
▪ Between 5% and 20% OR more than two sentences but not more than two paragraphs - 105 points
▪ As above but with critical aspects* plagiarised – 130 points
▪ Between 20% and 50% OR more than two paragraphs but not more than five paragraphs - 130 points
▪ As above but with critical aspects* plagiarised – 160 points
▪ Above 50% OR more than five paragraphs - 160 points
▪ Submission purchased from essay mill or ghostwriting service - 225 points

* Critical aspects are key ideas central to the assignment

Level / Stage

▪ Level 4 - 70 points
▪ Level 5 - 115 points
▪ Level 6 / Postgraduate - 140 points

Value of Assignment

▪ Standard weighting - 30 points
▪ Large project (e.g. final year dissertation) - 60 points

Additional Characteristics

▪ Evidence of deliberate attempt to disguise plagiarism by changing words, sentences or references to avoid detection - 40 points

5.6 The AMBeR Tariff requires that penalties be awarded based on the total of points assigned as follows:

Penalties - Summative Work:

280 – 329

- No further action beyond formal warning
- Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required, with no penalty on mark

330 – 379

- No further action beyond formal warning
- Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required, with no penalty on mark
- Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required but mark capped or reduced

380 – 479

- Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required but mark capped or reduced
- Assignment awarded 0% - no opportunity to resubmit

480 – 524

- Assignment awarded 0% - no opportunity to resubmit
- Module awarded 0% - re-sit required, but mark capped or reduced
- Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, but credit still awarded

525 – 559

- Module awarded 0% - re-sit required, but mark capped or reduced
- Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, but credit still awarded
- Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, and credit lost
- Award classification reduced
- Qualification reduced (e.g. Honours -> no Honours)
- Expelled from institution but credits retained
- Expelled from institution with credits withdrawn

560+

- Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to resit, and credit lost
- Award classification reduced
- Qualification reduced (e.g. Honours -> no Honours)
- Expelled from institution but credits retained
- Expelled from institution with credits withdrawn

Penalties – Formative Work:

280 – 379

- Informal warning

380+

- Formal warning, with record made contributing to the student's previous history

5.7 All of the above points and penalties were taken from the Plagiarism Reference Tariff, as published by P Tennant and G Rowell on behalf of plagiarismadvice.org, last accessed in July 2026 at: https://www.plagiarism.org/paper/plagiarism-referencetariff.

6. Appealing a decision

6.1 A student may appeal against the decision or penalty imposed on the following grounds:

- Evidence of administrative or procedural error which casts doubt on the decision of the Committee or on the fairness of the penalty.
- New evidence which for good reason was not available to the Panel at the time the decision was made.
- Evidence that the Panel acted unfairly or failed to consider matters which it should have done in reaching its decision.

6.2 Appeals must be submitted in line with the College's Complaints and Appeals Policy within 14 days of the date of the letter notifying the student of the outcome. A student who remains dissatisfied with the outcome after conclusion of the Complaints and Appeals Policy may request a Completion of Procedures letter from student_admin@mla.ac.uk and may be eligible to submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (How to complain to us - OIAHE.

7. Initiating a case for a suspected academic offence

7.1 The Module Leader will inform the Programme Services team if a suspected offence has occurred and will provide all of the information listed in Annex A to be considered by the Academic Offences Panel, along with a completed Academic Offences Proforma (Annex E), which will be stored securely in accordance with the MLA naming convention at Annex B.

8. Communication to Student

8.1 The Programme Services team will write to the student via email. A letter attached to the email will set out the allegation, provide a copy of the evidence being considered and enclose a proforma for the student to either accept or contest the allegation (see Annex C and E). The student must notify the Programme Services team of their intention to accept or contest within 7 days of the letter.

8.2 If the student accepts the allegation or does not respond, the information is passed to the Academic Offences Panel to determine the outcome.

8.3 If the student contests the allegation the Programme Services team will write to the student to confirm the date and time of the Academic Offences Panel meeting which will be no earlier than 7 days from the date of the letter. The student can either appear in person via Microsoft Teams or submit a written statement to be considered.

8.4 In both cases the Panel will consider the evidence and decide either:

- that the allegation is not substantiated and no further action is required, or;
- that the allegation is substantiated and a penalty will be applied.

8.5 The Programme Services team will report the Panel's decision to the student in writing via email with a decision letter attached (Annex G).

8.6 The coursework or exam paper should still be marked by the relevant academic so that if the allegation is unsubstantiated or no penalty is applied the student's provisional mark can be released.

8.7 If the outcome of the allegation is not finalised by the time the Assessment and Award Board meets the student should be advised to prepare to be referred in the event the allegation is upheld. If the allegation is not upheld then the student may not need to undertake the referred assessment and the student will receive the actual mark.

Annex A to MLA College Academic Offences Policy

Supporting Documentation

1. **Documents required for an offence related to coursework:**

   - Completed Academic Offences Proforma.
   - Copy of the assessment brief.
   - Copy of the student's work.
   - Copy of the original source from which the student work is allegedly derived with the plagiarised content clearly marked up and cross referenced on both the source and the student work.
     NB. - Originality reports generated from Turnitin can be used but must be supported with Tutor comments and a copy of the student's work annotated to indicate where plagiarism is suspected.
   - In the case of collusion, copies of the work of all students involved in the allegation must be provided with the sections which appear to have been worked on together clearly indicated on each

2. **Documents required for an offence related to an examination/test:**

   - Completed Academic Offences Proforma.
   - Copy of the invigilator's report.
   - Copy of any confiscated material.
   - Copy of the exam question and script completed by the student.
   - Report from the module leader confirming:
     - whether any of the material found on the student was relevant to the exam.
     - whether any of the material was used in the student's answers.
     - if no evidence has been retrieved comment on the standard of the exam script and whether the student performed beyond expectation.

Annex B to MLA College Academic Offences Policy

File naming convention

Item	Naming Convention	Example
Student Folder (individual)	Surname First Name Module code	Surname First Name MLA601
Student Folder (collusion) (within this folder there should then be an individual folder per student)	Module Code Collusion	MLA601 Collusion
Completed Partner Proforma	AO Proforma Module Code	AO Proforma MLA601
Initial Letter to Student	Surname First Name Initial Letter to Student Module Code	Surname First Name Initial Letter to Student MLA601
Assessment Brief	Module Code Assessment Brief	MLA601 Assessment Brief
Student's Work	Surname First Name Coursework Module Code	Surname First Name Coursework MLA601
Evidence	Evidence 1 Description of Evidence Module Code Evidence 2 Description of Evidence Module Code	For an Examination Offence this might be: Evidence 1 Invigilator Report MLA601 Evidence 2 Photograph of Confiscated Material MLA601 For an Assessment Offence this might be: Evidence 1 Turnitin Report MLA601 Evidence 2 Source A MLA601
Completed Student Response Proforma	Surname First Name Response Proforma Module Code	Surname First Name Response Proforma MLA601
Student Statement	Surname First Name Statement Module Code	Surname First Name Statement MODU1234

Annex C to MLA College Academic Offences Policy

NAME
ADDRESS
DATE

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear *NAME*

MODULE: *MODCODE MOD NAME*

I regret to inform you that the academic involved in marking your submission for the above assessment have indicated that there is a suspicion of academic dishonesty.

It is suggested that you have breached the following regulation;

Choose statement(s) from list of taught module offences or examination/test offences from paragraphs 2 and 3 of this policy.

I must now advise you that, according to the MLA College Academic Regulations (copy enclosed), you must confirm in writing to the Programme Services Administrator, within 7 days of the date of this letter, whether you wish to accept or contest the allegation.

If you accept the allegation, the case will be considered by the Academic Offences Panel. If you wish you may submit a mitigating statement for consideration by the Panel. Should a response not be received within 7 days, it will be assumed that you have accepted the allegation and the case will be forwarded to the Panel.

If you contest the allegation, you may attend the Academic Offences Panel. The date of the meeting will be confirmed later, should you decide to take this course of action. You have the right to be heard in absentia if you are unable to attend but wish to submit a written statement. Any statement or evidence must be provided a minimum of 7 days prior to the date of the meeting.

Enclosed is a response proforma that you must complete to inform us of your intentions. Also included are some supporting documents for your information.

A copy of this letter has been sent to both your personal and MLA College e-mail accounts. If you have any queries regarding this letter or require further advice please contact the Programme Services Administrator at student.admin@mla.ac.uk

Yours Sincerely,

Enter Details of Sender

Include documents:
Marked up copy of assessment submitted
Marked up copy of evidence
Response pro-forma
Academic Regulations
Academic Offences Policy

Cc: Module Leader, Programme Services Administrator

Annex D to MLA College Academic Offences Policy

Student Response Proforma

Full Name:	Student Number:
Programme Title:	
Module Code:	Module Title:

Part 1 (complete if you accept the allegation)

Please check the box below

☐ I accept that I have committed an academic offence and understand that the case will be considered by the Academic Offences Panel.

NB: If a response is not received within 7 days of the date of the accompanying letter, it will be assumed that you do not wish to contest the allegation and your case will be referred to the Academic Offences Panel.

Please check one box below as appropriate

☐ I attach a statement which I wish the Panel to consider
☐ I do not intend to submit a statement

Signed:	Date:

Part 1 (complete if you wish to contest the allegation)

Please check the box below

☐ I wish to contest the allegation of an academic offence and understand that the case will be considered by the Academic Offences Panel.

Please check boxes below as appropriate

☐ I wish to attend the Panel meeting in person or via Teams
☐ I will be accompanied at the Panel meeting by an additional person

Please provide the name of the individual, and their role (e.g. fellow student, Student Support Officer, staff member, personal friend):

☐ I will not be accompanied by anyone
☐ I attach a statement which I wish the Panel to consider

OR

☐ I do not wish to attend the Panel meeting
☐ I attach a statement which I wish the Panel to consider

Signed:	Date:

Annex E to MLA College Academic Offences Policy

Academic Offences Proforma

Student Name	
Student Number	
Programme Title	
Module Code	
Module Title	
Credit value	
Name of assignment	
Assignment weighting	
Type of allegation (e.g., plagiarism, fabrication, collusion etc.)	
Written statement (including guidance / instructions given to the student for practical / in class test assessments):	
Information given to students about academic offences and referencing:	
Module Tutor submitting the proforma	
Date	

Annex F to MLA College Academic Offences Policy

Academic Offences Panel Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

To ensure the comprehensive and fair evaluation of all cases of alleged Academic Offences in line with the Academic Offences Policy and Procedures and MLA College Academic Regulations.

The Panel will be responsible for considering the following:

- Whether or not the offence allegation is to be upheld based on the information and documentation provided.
- If the allegation is upheld, the extent of the advantage gained by the offence and the severity of the offence.
- If the allegation is upheld, the student's academic stage, in relation to the College's expectations about knowledge of good academic practice and personal responsibility.
- If the allegation is upheld, the number of previous offences.
- The type of penalty (if any) to be applied.

Membership

Vice-Rector (Academic) or Academic Registrar (Chair)
Two independent members of Academic staff
Head of Student and Programme Services (or nominee)

Frequency of meetings:

As required

Annex G to MLA College Academic Offences Policy

Academic Offence Upheld Decision Letter Template

NAME
ADDRESS
DATE

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear *NAME*

RE: Assessment Offence – *MODULE CODE MODULE TITLE*

The Academic Offences Panel has now considered your case relating to an assessment offence indicated above.

The Panel concluded that you were in breach of the following regulations:

OFFENCE TYPE, EXPLANATION.

The penalty imposed will be *PENALTY TYPE*

For implications regarding your Assessment and Award board decision, please see the College's Academic Regulations, which includes definitions of academic offences. If you are still unclear what constitutes an academic offence you can discuss this with the Student Experience Team at student.experience@mla.ac.uk

If you wish to appeal against the decision or penalty you may do so on the following grounds:

- Evidence of administrative or procedural error which casts doubt on the decision of the Panel or on the fairness of the penalty.
- New evidence which for good reason was not available to the Panel at the time the decision was made.
- Evidence that the Panel acted unfairly or failed to take into account matters which it should have done in reaching its decision.

Appeals must be submitted in line with the College's Complaints and Appeals Policy within 14 days of the date of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Enter Details of Sender