

RVC Student Academic Misconduct Procedures 2023/24

**For all RVC students registered on a
undergraduate or postgraduate taught
programmes**

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1. Introduction and purpose

1.1 The RVC is responsible for ensuring all assessments are designed, undertaken, and regulated to ensure they are of an equitable standard for all students.

1.2 Any student(s) registered on a taught programme attempting or taking an unfair advantage poses a threat to academic standards and the vast majority of individuals who achieve credits and are awarded qualifications based on legitimate means.

1.3 Academic misconduct is defined by the Office of Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) as *“Any action by a student which gives or has the potential to give an unfair advantage in an examination or assessment or might assist someone else to gain an unfair advantage, or any activity likely to undermine the integrity essential to scholarship and research.”*

1.4 All forms of academic misconduct are regarded as an academic offence and will be sanctioned and investigated under the Academic Misconduct Procedures.

1.5 These procedures explain how the RVC investigates allegations of academic misconduct in relation to any material or work submitted for assessment.

2. Definitions and examples of academic misconduct

2.1 Categories and definitions of academic misconduct are defined as:

Category	Definition
Plagiarism	Copying and using someone else’s work, whether intentionally or unintentionally, as if it were the student’s own. Another person’s work includes any source that is published or unpublished that has been produced including words, images, diagrams, formulae ideas and judgments, discoveries, and results. Direct quotations (whether extended or short) from the published or unpublished work of another person must always be clearly identified. Quotations must accurately refer to and acknowledge the author or

	<p>person who originally wrote or produced the work.</p> <p>Paraphrasing – using other words to express another person’s ideas and judgments. We encourage students to use paraphrasing, but they must appropriately acknowledge the original source (in a footnote or bracket following the paraphrasing).</p>
Plagiarism example:	<p>Copying and pasting from other sources which can include internet sources, published or unpublished articles, another student’s revision material, lecture, or open book article materials.</p>
Self Plagiarism or text recycling	<p>Submissions by a student that reference their own material (either in whole or part) are not considered as academic misconduct. This means students are permitted to use work previously submitted in a former academic year, for another course or at another institution.</p> <p>Previously used material for summative assessment is however likely to be considered academic misconduct, for example, submitting the same work for two separate assignments. The credit of such material will therefore be subject to academic judgment which may result in an investigation under these procedures.</p>
Acceptable self-plagiarism example:	<p>Where an introductory piece of work is summatively assessed but also provides extensive feedback for the student and is considered a developmental exercise.</p> <p>Example 1 - a project outline or grant proposal which then leads to a larger research project report.</p> <p>Example 2 - submission of an asset or "patch" for larger reflective pieces of work such as a portfolio.</p>
Mosaic copying or scaffolding	<p>Where key points and structure of another person’s work have been used as a scaffold (framework) for your own work without acknowledgement of the original source.</p>
Research misconduct	<p>Research Misconduct includes (but is not limited to): fabrication; falsification; misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement; piracy (deliberate</p>

	<p>exploitation of the ideas of others without their consent); plagiarism and failure to follow accepted procedures or exercise due care in carrying out your responsibilities for i) avoiding unreasonable risk or harm to animals or humans used in research and the environment ii) the proper handling of privileged or private information on individuals collected during the research.</p>
Falsifying or fabricating results, data, evidence, or experimental results.	Submitting false or misleading results, data, or evidence by a way of changing or omitting
Breaches of Ethics	A breach of ethics or ethical approval which has undermined the integrity of your own work, the welfare of animals, yourself, or others e.g., carrying out research without appropriate consent.
Cheating in examinations or other forms of assessment	This may include possession of unauthorised material or technology during an examination or attempting to access unseen assessment materials in advance of an examination. This may also include collaboration or collusion between students during the examination.
Contract cheating	Where someone completes work for a student who then submits it as their own work for example buying essays and/or assessments online.
Failure to follow assessment or exam instructions either online or in person.	Failure to follow published examination instructions and/or the exam integrity commitment whether unintentional or intentional.
Using generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT Chatbots	<p>The use of Chat GPT and other AI sites by students in the preparation of their assessments is not prohibited unless specifically stated within the assessment guidelines for an individual piece of work or has been specifically stated within the Assessment and Award Regulations for a module or year of study.</p> <p>However, if students do use AI sites to prepare their assessments, they must reference them in the same way as any other source materials. If students use</p>

	ChatGPT or other AI sites outside of these restrictions it will be considered academic misconduct.
Submitting fraudulent mitigating circumstances	Misrepresenting a case of extenuating circumstances to gain a deadline extension or any other advantage in assessment shall be considered academic misconduct.

3. General principles

3.1 There are two procedures defined below under sections 11 and 12: One for academic misconduct discovered in more minor pieces of assessed work (e.g., an assignment worth a relatively small proportion of the final mark) and one where a more significant piece of work is affected (e.g., an end-of-year summative examination or research project).

3.2 In determining a penalty in relation to academic misconduct, the intention to deceive will be an important consideration in terms of the outcome.

3.3 Investigations will be conducted by two members of academic staff or one academic member of staff and one member of senior administrative staff.

3.4 All correspondence concerning proceedings under these regulations will be sent to the student's RVC email address. Any material sent will be deemed to have been received by the student concerned unless non-delivery is subsequently proven.

3.5 None of the proceedings outlined below will be invalidated or postponed by reason of absence (except when advance notification is received and sufficient reason provided) from any hearing of any party called to attend an investigation, provided that the student against whom a case has been made has been sent written notice of the hearing.

3.6 Whilst these procedures are underway the student may continue to attend classes, undertake examinations and/or continue with research.

3.7 The values of scholarship, the relevant professional or vocational context of the studies and the national guidelines on penalties for plagiarism can be found in the [AMBeR Plagiarism Reference Tariff](#).

3.8 If an investigation or Academic Misconduct Panel determine there is no case to answer, this will conclude any further action under these procedures.

4. How to report academic misconduct

4.1 All reports of alleged academic misconduct need to be submitted using the [Academic Misconduct Report Form](#).

4.2 Reporting staff members are encouraged to review the [Detecting and Reporting Academic Misconduct Guidance](#) on the [Learn Staff Hub](#) under the Academic Registry section before submitting any allegations of academic misconduct.

4.3 Any student wishing to report concerns of academic misconduct will be required to submit their concerns, supported by evidence to academicconduct@rvc.ac.uk.

4.4 The Student Appeals Complaint and Conduct (SACC) Team will undertake an initial review of the report and redirect the case to the relevant process under these procedures.

4.5 Should the case be found to be unsubstantiated, the SACC Team will respond to the reporting student or reporting staff member explaining the reason for the decision made.

5. Support and advice for students

5.1 Students who have been reported for academic misconduct or have concerns about raising a report can approach a range of staff and supporters for advice. Examples are (but not restricted to) listed below:

- Tutor
- Senior Tutor
- Supervisor
- Departmental Postgraduate Research (PGR) Advisor
- [Research Degrees Officer](#)
- [Student Union Representative](#)
- Course Director or Academic Head of the Graduate School
- Year Leader
- [Advice Centre](#)
- [RVC Report and Support](#)

- [Student Union Representative](#)

6. Confidentiality and record keeping

- 6.1 Cases of academic misconduct are treated with confidentiality and are not discussed amongst the RVC or wider community. Only key members of staff will be notified such as the Exams Office, the student(s) tutor and/or supervisor, and any RVC support services required to provide additional development and support in relation to any post-meeting recommendations or conditions.
- 6.2 The Academic Board will receive annual reports of anonymised academic misconduct cases including data on the total number of reported case types, outcomes and identified risk and control measures. The RVC will evaluate and audit the academic misconduct cases on an annual basis, along with other forms of feedback, to improve the quality and effectiveness of the RVC's governance, compliance, and service delivery standards.
- 6.3 Students are advised to keep a copy of all correspondence in the event that they are dissatisfied with the academic misconduct outcome and wish to use this information as part of their supporting evidence when making a request for a Final Formal Review or submitting a complaint to the Office of Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE).
- 6.4 Academic misconduct records are administered centrally by the SACC Team within the Academic Registry. Records of academic misconduct cases are retained for 3 years following student graduation or exit from the RVC to enable the RVC to respond to any requests regarding the decision and processes that may be made by the OIA and/or Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.
- 6.5 To help support the RVC annual evaluation any student who undertakes the academic misconduct process will be invited to complete a [Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Survey](#).

7. Retention, Deletion and Archiving

- 7.1 Data relating to academic misconduct cases is used to:

- 7.1.1 Monitor and analyse the management of casework within the required timeframe in order to improve and develop RVC service delivery.
 - 7.1.2 Respond to internal audit requirements.
 - 7.1.3 Enable the RVC to respond to any requests regarding the decision and process that may be made by the OIA.
 - 7.1.4 Conduct the periodic evaluation of cases in relation to FOI Requests.
- 7.2 Investigating staff members or Panel members who obtain copies of records before and during an academic misconduct investigation and/or Hearing will be sent an automated reminder to delete and/or shred any papers and/or documented evidence related to the investigation and/or Hearing.
- 7.3 This will include double deleting any copies saved in download folders. Access will also be removed from the created OneDrive folder where case documents are securely stored.

8. Related procedures.

- 8.1 Where a student is studying towards a qualification as a veterinary nurse or a veterinary surgeon and this procedure has established that the student had used unfair means or shown an intent to deceive or a significant failure of due care in research or clinical practice, the case will be referred to the Senior Tutor to consider any action under the [Professional Requirements Procedure](#).
- 8.2 Once the Professional Requirements are concluded, the Senior Tutor will determine whether any further action is warranted.
- 8.2 At any stage of this process should a student be referred to a Professional Requirements Procedure then the Academic Misconduct procedure will be suspended until the Professional Requirements Procedure has concluded and the case is referred back. If the matter is not referred back, the Academic Misconduct procedure will be considered completed.
- 8.3 Where a student is registered on a non-taught PG programme i.e., Professional Doctorate, PhD and MRes then the case should be referred to the 'Named Person' for the [Policy and procedure for dealing with allegations of research misconduct](#). The Named Person is the RVC's VP for Research and Innovation. For further advice refer to section 12.5.

9. Attendance and engagement

- 9.1 Students are expected to fully engage with the Academic Misconduct procedures. This includes responding to requests for information and attending hearings and meetings scheduled under this procedure. Whilst the RVC will make every effort to minimise any inconvenience or disruption to students in the scheduling of meetings this may not always be possible.
- 9.2 Failure to engage with the Academic Misconduct procedure may result in additional action being taken under this procedure.
- 9.3 Approval of non-attendance is only permitted in exceptional circumstances (i.e., medical grounds). If approval is granted, the hearing will be postponed with the intention of rescheduling at the earliest available opportunity.
- 9.4 If a student is unable to attend any meeting or hearing under this procedure, or fails to engage with the procedure, the SACC Team/Chair of the academic misconduct panel may agree that the allegation be considered in the student's absence based on the evidence available at the time of the meeting or hearing.
- 9.5 For cases where a student withdraws from the RVC whilst an academic misconduct investigation is ongoing, the academic misconduct case will normally be concluded in the student's absence.

10. Reasonable Adjustments

- 10.1 The RVC encourages students to disclose, at the earliest opportunity, any disabilities, learning differences or personal circumstances that may require the RVC to make reasonable adjustments to Academic Misconduct processes so that the RVC has sufficient time to consider these requests and implement any agreed adjustments. Request can be submitted in writing to academicconduct@rvc.ac.uk.
- 10.2 Reasonable adjustment may include providing information in different formats, providing additional breaks during meetings, or conducting meetings via videoconferencing (for example where students are working/carers and unable to travel).

11. Process for assessment (below 30 credits)

- 11.1 Section 11 process applies to in-course assessments other than major projects within taught courses that appear to plagiarise another published source or show some evidence of research misconduct in a minor project. (A major project counts for more than 30 credits or equivalent).
- 11.2 The student will be interviewed by two members of academic staff to determine whether academic misconduct was evident and under what circumstances. Members of staff will also check on the student's understanding of scholarship and referencing processes and proper conduct of research as appropriate.
- 11.3 After consideration of the circumstances the student's work will be awarded a mark reflecting the extent of plagiarism or academic misconduct. When deciding a sanction, members of staff will determine whether the incident represents:
- 11.3.1 nothing more than poor scholarship or research practice
 - or
 - 11.3.2 demonstrates intent to deceive.
- 11.4 In the case of poor scholarship or research practice the mark awarded will be commensurate with the quality of the work and the extent of the work affected. (This could result in a mark of zero when the poor scholarship or work of others is taken into account). The student will be directed to sources of advice and support about how to improve their work.
- 11.5 In the case of intent to deceive, a mark of zero will be awarded as a minimum penalty. The student will be directed to sources of advice and about how to improve their work.
- 11.6 In either case no further penalty other than the award of zero for the piece of work concerned can be recommended by the two members of staff.
- 11.7 After the interview one of two courses of action may be taken:
- 11.7.1 The two members of staff recommend that the case be put before an Academic Misconduct Panel where the Panel will consider the case further

and to consider the imposition of a penalty greater than award of zero marks for the work.

or

11.7.2 The student opts to appeal the decision under the Final Formal Review Procedures (refer to section 16) on the understanding that this could result in the increase, decrease or elimination of the penalty.

11.8 The student will receive a letter confirming the outcome within 7 calendar days after the investigation meeting by the SACC Team. Should there be any unforeseen delay then the reason for this will be made clear to the student, and they will be provided with a revised outcome date.

11.9 Students should decide whether they accept the outcome once they have been provided with marks. Students may appeal the outcome, based on the allowable grounds available under section 16.

11.10 Students will be given 7 calendar days to respond to the letter from the date of the outcome by either accepting the outcome or confirming their intention to submit a Final Formal Review. The deadline for submitting a Final Formal Review request is outlined in section 16.

11.11 Should there be any delays caused by the RVC or the student which prevent the student from being able to respond to the letter within the procedure timeline then this will be considered and managed by the SACC Team. An example of this may be a delay in receiving the published marks.

11.12 Signing the letter indicates the student accepts the outcome and concludes the procedure.

11.13 A copy of the signed letter will be sent to the Exams Officer so that the incident is reported at the next Examination Board meeting.

12. Process – Major pieces of work (above 30 credits)

12.1 On suspecting an irregularity, the invigilator or examiner for a taught course should submit an [Academic Report Form](#) relating to the incident to the Director of Assessment who shall determine whether there is a prima facie case for suspected academic misconduct to be considered by a Panel.

- 12.2 On suspecting any other irregularity in relation to a taught course (that is not covered by section 11 above) the student will be interviewed by two members of staff to determine whether there is a prima facie case for suspected academic misconduct to be considered by a Panel.
- 12.3 Where relevant, members of staff will also check on the student's understanding of scholarship and referencing processes and proper conduct of research as appropriate. Notes will be taken.
- 12.4 The record of the meeting shall be written by a member of the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Team.
- 12.5 On suspecting any unsatisfactory matter concerning a person registered for a non-taught research degree programme, the person discovering the suspected concern should complete an [Academic Misconduct Report Form](#) and submit it to the Director of the Graduate School, who will determine whether there is a prima facie case for the suspected academic misconduct to be investigated by the [Policy and procedure for dealing with allegations of research misconduct](#).
- 12.6 Any cases which are complex or raise other issues which are not outlined within these procedures or relate to other RVC procedures should be discussed directly with the Registrar or their nominee before action is taken.

13. The Academic Misconduct Panel

13.1 Composition of the Panel:

13.1.1 Chair appointed by the SACC Team

13.1.2 A nominee of the President of the Student Union selected for (i) their independence from the student whose case is being considered (ii) their understanding of the principles at stake and (iii) the broad context of the study of the student whose case is being considered.

13.1.3 A course director, or year leader, from a course different to that being studied by the student concerned.

Or

13.1.4 For Research Degree Students: An expert in the subject area who is independent of the student concerned and his/ her project. (This might be a person external to the RVC).

And

- 13.1.5 Another senior researcher from a different research area within the RVC.
- 13.2 The SACC Team or their nominee will act as the note-taker to the Panel. The quorum shall be three members plus the note-taker.
- 13.3 The RVC Student Union member of the panel can be omitted from the panel membership at the request of the student whose case is being considered. Where this occurs, the quorum must remain at two people plus the note taker.
- 13.4 The Panel and the student will be presented with the case evidence no less than 7 calendar days before the meeting.
- 13.5 Any member of the Panel discovering, on reading the papers, that they are connected to the case will declare their interest to the SACC Team, who will be required to appoint an alternative panel member.
- 13.6 The student will be allowed to make a written response to the papers if they wish. This response should be submitted no later than one week before the meeting. Exceptionally, later submissions will require the permission of the SACC Team before they can be accepted.
- 13.7 The Panel will hold the hearing in the presence of the student. The meeting will be recorded under the supervision of the notetaker.
- 13.8 Panel hearings will be held in person as a general practice. The student may attend remotely, provided the arrangement is deemed suitable by the Chair.
- 13.9 The Student has the right to be accompanied by a supporter. The student must notify the SACC Team of the name and status of the supporter in advance of the meeting. The supporter may not be a member of the relevant Board of Examiners or Research Degrees Committee.
- 13.10 After interviewing all parties concerned with the case and considering all evidence, the Panel will make its decision in private. This session will not be recorded but summary notes will be taken by the note taker.
- 13.11 The investigatory process and/or Panel should be completed within 30 calendar days from

the report being received in full by the SACC Team. The combined process should take no longer than 60 calendar days.

14. Panel outcome

- 14.1 The panel will decide the outcome based on the balance of probability (whether something is more likely than not to have occurred) taking appropriate care to follow the OIA's principles of natural justice: *“Decision makers must come to matters without bias or a reasonable perception of bias; each party must have a fair hearing; the process must be completed without delay; and decision makers must make reasonable decisions and give reasons for those decisions.”*
- 14.2 Post-meeting deliberation will be limited to the Panel and Panel notetaker only. Notes will be taken but Panel discussion will not be recorded.
- 14.3 The main consideration under the 'Panel' discussion will be to:
- Review, consider and determine the allegations made against the reported student.
 - Determine the seriousness of any offences which are proven.
 - Apply a sanction with consideration to any relevant aggravating and mitigating factors.
 - Consideration of referral to other procedures i.e., Professional Requirements Committee.
- 14.4 The Panel may impose one or more sanctions, taking into account the specific allegations, the particular features of the case, the relevant mitigation brought forward and in certain cases any impact statement provided by the reporting student.
- 14.5 Possible outcomes available to the Panel are:
- No further action, the case is unfounded
 - The previous sanction remains the same
 - To increase or decrease the sanction i.e., decrease or increase the previous sanctioned mark.
 - Qualification reduced (e.g. Honours -> no Honours)
 - Remove any right of resubmission, re-sit or retake.
 - Suspension from the programme of study and requirement to retake, resit and resubmit an assessment or module in whole or part.
 - Withdraw the student with credits retained or removed.
 - Revoke an award from within 3 months of graduation

14.6 An informal outcome of the Panel can be delivered to the student if a decision is made the same day. The student can choose to have this delivered via email or telephone or be recalled back once the post deliberations are complete.

14.7 The formal written outcome will then be delivered to the student within 7 calendar days.

15. Reconsidering the same offence

15.1 Allegations of academic misconduct may be reconsidered if new evidence emerges which, for good reason, could not have been obtained at the time of the initial investigation or Hearing.

15.2 The RVC will consider the below factors to determine whether or not it is proportionate to reconsider the same offence in light of new evidence:

15.2.1 The length of time that has elapsed and the effect of this on the reliability of any evidence to be considered.

15.2.2 The severity of the alleged offence.

15.2.3 The impact on the student of undergoing a second academic misconduct process.

15.2.4 Whether leaving the matter unaddressed would impact matters of fitness to practise.

16. Final Formal Review (Internal)

16.1 The student can request a Final Formal Review if they have grounds to believe:

16.1.1 There is new evidence that could not have been, or for good reason was not, made available at the time of the hearing.

16.1.2 Evidence can be produced of significant procedural errors made during the formal complaints process.

16.1.3 The previous outcome is manifestly unreasonable.

16.2 Students requesting a Final Formal Review must do so in writing to the Director of Governance at governance@rvc.ac.uk within 28 days of the formal complaint outcome. Full details and process are outlined in the [Final Formal Review Procedures](#).

17. Completion of procedures

17.1 If the RVC determines that an appeal is not justified or that a case is not permitted to proceed under the Final Formal Review Process, the RVC will provide a Completion of Procedures Letter to the student within 28 days. This letter will include an explanation of the decision reached.

17.2 A Completion of Procedures letter is required should the student wish to advance a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education regarding the disciplinary procedure. The RVC will usually only issue a Completion of Procedures letter once the disciplinary procedure has concluded and a final decision has been provided to the student.

18. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

18.1 Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a Final Formal Review can apply to the OIA for an independent review. Requests for OIA review must be made no later than 12 months after the Final Formal Review decision.

18.2 The OIA has published an *Introduction to the OIA for Students* which can be downloaded from <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2264/intrototheoia-students-jan-2019.pdf>

18.3 Further guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA and the OIA Complaint Form can also be found on the OIA's website: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/can-you-complain-to-us/>