

STUDENT GUIDANCE

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT PENALTY:

FIRST OFFENCE No Panel Required

I have been informed that a penalty for academic misconduct has been imposed on my assessment. What does this mean?

The marker of your assessment recently raised a request to investigate your submission for a potential academic misconduct offence. The allegation, evidence and your submission were forwarded to the Chair of the Department Academic Misconduct Panel who, in consultation with another academic colleague, agreed that there was clear evidence to determine that an offence has occurred, on the balance of probabilities.

The Regulations on Academic Misconduct 2024-25 include an option to deal with some allegations of academic misconduct without the need for a full Academic Misconduct Panel meeting. This option can only be exercised where the Chair of the Department Panel, and another academic, are both satisfied that there is **clear evidence of academic misconduct**. In such cases the student may choose to accept a penalty to be applied to the assessment, instead of attending an Academic Misconduct Panel meeting.

How has the penalty been decided?

You have been offered the option to accept a penalty as this is your first offence. The letter you have received explains the reasoning for this decision and the penalty that has been deemed to be appropriate.

Most cases which are suitable for this process will receive a penalty at the lower end of the spectrum, typically a deduction of 10% from the provisional mark, or a cap at the pass mark. However, sometimes extensive plagiarism is apparent, and in these cases a mark of zero may be warranted.

Your provisional mark has been taken into account when determining the penalty. If this was below the pass mark, then obviously a cap at the pass mark could not be applied. In these circumstances a mark of zero for the assessment is likely to be appropriate, to reflect the fact that your work has not satisfied the requirements to pass *and* to reflect a penalty for academic misconduct.

Do I have to accept the penalty offered?

No, you do not. You have 10 working days in which to consider the documents provided and decide what to do. You are advised to read these through carefully as they will outline the allegation and evidence provided by the marker, as well as the reason why you have been offered this option. Please bear in mind, however, that there does not need to be any intention on your part to commit plagiarism in order for it to have occurred.

If you reject the penalty offered to you, you will be invited to attend an Academic Misconduct Panel meeting which you will be expected to attend. The meeting will be your opportunity to contest the allegation made by the marker or to explain to the panel why you believe that the penalty imposed is too severe. You may also disclose any mitigating circumstances which affected you at the time of the offence.

However, before you consider this option, you should think carefully about how you will address the issues raised by the marker, bearing in mind that plagiarism is an absolute, i.e., it has either occurred or it has not. It is not necessary for there to be evidence of intent to commit academic misconduct for it to be proven, and accidental or unintended plagiarism is nevertheless academic misconduct. You should discuss the evidence presented with your personal tutor so that you can better understand the allegations against you.

If you choose to reject the penalty offered and proceed to an Academic Misconduct Panel then the allegation will be considered afresh. This means that only the evidence of the allegation and your representations at the meeting will be considered by the Panel. The full range of penalties (section 5(4) of the Regulations on Academic Misconduct 2024-25 are available to the Panel and therefore a more lenient *or* severe penalty can be imposed.

Before reaching a decision we strongly recommend that you review the information and guidance available on the [Student Intranet](#), and consider seeking the advice of the [Students Union Advice Centre](#) who can help you to consider the evidence and the options available to you. We also recommend that you download copies of the documents in your case file and discuss the allegation with your personal tutor.

You should only request a panel meeting if you intend to contest the allegation, or you have mitigating circumstances for the offence committed.

Are there any consequences if I choose to accept the penalty and not discuss my case at a panel meeting?

An Academic Panel meeting is an opportunity to learn about how the allegation of misconduct has arisen, and how you can ensure you do not commit future offences. If you choose to accept the penalty you will not have this opportunity. However, the letter you have received outlines steps you can take to improve your understanding of the requirements of academic integrity and, if you have not done so you should start by taking the Academic Integrity Module (SS1001) on Moodle and contacting your personal tutor for advice.

You will be expected to address any gaps in your understanding of the requirements of academic integrity. Failure to do so will not excuse any future offences as it will be assumed that you are acting in full knowledge and understanding of the Regulations and requirements of good academic practice. Repeat allegations will require an Academic Misconduct Panel meeting and, if proven, are likely to incur a more severe penalty. There is plenty of support available and we strongly recommend that you take advantage of it. Please see the bottom of this document for further details and links to academic and pastoral support offered by the University.

Finally, please bear in mind that if you decide to accept the penalty and as a result do not speak to the panel, you cannot subsequently provide information or evidence to be taken into account. Therefore, if you have any information such as mitigating circumstances you would like the panel to consider, you should opt to attend an Academic Panel meeting. Further information will not be considered retrospectively or on appeal.

How do I respond to the penalty letter?

You should email AcademicMisconduct@rhul.ac.uk within 10 working days of receiving the penalty offer letter to confirm either:

1. That you **accept** the penalty, in which case we will inform your school so that the penalty can be applied to your record. Or;
2. That you **reject** the penalty, in which case you will be invited to a panel meeting to discuss the allegation.

You cannot appeal this decision until this process is complete and the penalty has been imposed. Details of what to appeal and when will be provided to you at the relevant time.

I did not respond to the letter within 10 working days. What happens now?

If you do not let us know your decision within 10 working days of the letter informing you of the penalty offered, it will be assumed that you do not wish to contest the allegation or provide any additional information for consideration. The penalty recommended will therefore be imposed and your School will be informed and asked to update your record accordingly.

How and when will my penalty be applied?

Your School will be informed of the penalty decision at the same time as we contact you to confirm your acceptance of the penalty has been received.

Your mark will be uploaded to Moodle (or via the usual process) and the School Administration team will ensure that the penalty is correctly applied.

You should allow at least 7 days for your mark and record to be amended following the penalty acceptance. If your record has not been amended after this time, please contact your School Helpdesk directly.

Can I appeal the decision after the penalty has been applied to my record?

An appeal can only be submitted AFTER the penalty has been applied and the process is complete. You are therefore strongly advised to **respond by the deadline provided if you wish to contest the penalty offered and request a panel meeting** to discuss the allegation. For an appeal to be successful, you will need to demonstrate why you could not have presented this information to a panel for consideration at the appropriate time.

It is important to be clear that you cannot appeal the decision of the academics that an offence of academic misconduct has occurred, since this is a matter of academic judgement. However, you can appeal against the penalty imposed under the Regulations on Academic Misconduct. This means that you cannot challenge the decision made in determining that you committed an offence, but you can appeal against the severity of the penalty imposed.

There are three possible grounds on which you can appeal against the penalty:

1. that there is evidence of a failure to follow the procedures set out in these regulations which might cause reasonable doubt as to the fairness of the decision (**'procedural irregularity'**);
2. that fresh evidence can be presented which you could not with reasonable diligence have disclosed before the decision was made and which might cause reasonable doubt as to the fairness of that decision (**'fresh evidence'**);
3. that the decision was perverse given the evidence which was available at the time.


You must be able to demonstrate that you meet one of these grounds for your appeal to be upheld.

To submit an appeal for consideration, you are advised to read the information provided on the student intranet: [Make an academic appeal - Royal Holloway Student Intranet](#). You will need to submit an online form located on these pages with all your supporting evidence. **You must submit your appeal within 15 working days of the outcome being sent to you.**

Your appeal will be assigned an investigating officer with no previous involvement in the case who will review the information you have presented and gather all the information regarding your panel meeting. The officer will write to a Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) outlining the details of the case and ask them to decide whether you meet the grounds of appeal. The PVC, or their nominee, will have a number of options available to them if they determine that you meet the ground of appeal. They can decide:

- (a) to amend or set aside the decision;
- (b) to set aside the original decision and refer the case back for reconsideration ;
- (c) to confirm the decision;
- (d) to convene an Appeals Committee

If you are considering submitting an appeal against your penalty, you are strongly advised to seek advice from both the SU Advice Centre and your Personal tutor. They will help you to determine if you are likely to meet the grounds of appeal. Unfortunately, it can take some time to investigate each case thoroughly and you should allow for around 2 months for your appeal to be considered by the Academic Investigations team.



ACADEMIC SUPPORT


[Academic Regulations](#)

[SS1001: Academic Integrity](#) - Moodle course

[CeDAS](#) - Academic skills, including referencing and how to avoid plagiarism

[Library](#) - guidance and advice on referencing

Your Personal Tutor – contact your School Helpdesk for more info



WELLBEING SUPPORT

[Students Union Advice Centre](#) – independent advice about the case and support at the meeting

[Wellbeing Service](#) - can provide emotional support

[Disability & Neurodiversity Services](#) – register for support with any long term conditions or a specific learning difficulty