

STUDENT GUIDANCE:

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT PENALTIES APPLIED BY THE CHAIR

I have been informed that the Chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel has imposed a penalty for academic misconduct. What does this mean?

The marker of your assessment has 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 sufficient evidence to determine that an offence has occurred, on the balance of probabilities.

The Regulations on Academic Misconduct 2023-24 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 Panel is satisfied that there is **clear evidence of academic misconduct**, and a Panel meeting is not required to determine whether the offence has occurred. If the Chair decides that it is appropriate, they may offer a student the option of accepting a penalty to be applied to the assessment, instead of attending an Academic Misconduct Panel meeting.

How has the Chair decided which penalty is appropriate?

As this is your first offence, the Chair has decided to offer you this option. The letter you have received explains the Chair's reasoning for this decision and the penalty that has been deemed to be appropriate for your case and level of offence.

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.

In addition, the Chair will consider your provisional mark when determining the penalty. If your mark is below the pass mark, then obviously a cap at the pass mark cannot be applied. In these circumstances the Chair will probably decide to impose a mark of zero for the assessment, 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 Chair of 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 chair-imposed penalty 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 2023-24) 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 College.

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 chair-imposed penalty letter?

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

1. That you **accept** the chair-imposed 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 chair-imposed penalty, in which case you will be invited to a panel meeting to discuss the allegation.

You cannot appeal the decision of the Chair 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 Chair's decision, it will be assumed that you do not wish to contest the allegation or provide any additional information for consideration. The penalty recommended by the Chair 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 made by the Chair 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 decision of the Chair of the panel 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 Panel 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 by the panel 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 Senior Vice Principal outlining the details of case and ask them to decide whether you meet the grounds of appeal. The SVP, 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 on 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.

Sources of Support

Academic Support

[Academic Regulations](#) – See in particular the Regulations on Academic Misconduct

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

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

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

Your Personal Tutor

Personal and Wellbeing Support

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

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

[Disability & Neurodiversity Team](#) – register for support with any longer-term conditional or a specific learning difficulty