

Royal Northern College of Music

Academic Integrity

Policy & Procedure

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RNCM
ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE of MUSIC

Advice and guidance on academic integrity and how to avoid common forms of malpractice (e.g. plagiarism) will be made available to students through programme and College induction processes and the Student Information Handbook. Ignorance of the procedures will not of itself constitute a defence to an accusation of infringement.

The Academic Misconduct procedure applies to all registered students. Postgraduate research students (PGRs) will be subject to the Good Research Conduct policy and may be directed to this policy for any cases of alleged academic misconduct.

Definition

Academic Integrity permeates the whole academic experience, from performance, through assessments, to award. The College acts with integrity towards its students and demands high standards from its staff and student body.

Malpractice may be broadly defined as an attempt to gain an advantage over other students by the use of unfair and unacceptable methods. Common to all cases of malpractice is the attempt to affect by deceitful means an assessment of academic ability, standing or progress and to falsely seek an award of the RNCM without meeting the required standard.

All disciplinary aspects of this procedure apply solely to academic misconduct that has taken place within summative assessment i.e. assessment that counts towards academic credit, level progression and final awards. Summative assessment includes (but is not limited to) formal examinations, group work, essays, projects and dissertations.

When academic misconduct is identified within formative assessment (which takes place in-year as part of the learning process and does not count towards academic credit) it will not be taken forward to a formal misconduct investigation. It will instead, be addressed through academic feedback and may lead to more developmental engagement to ensure that the student is able to maintain academic integrity at summative assessments.

Types of malpractice

- *Plagiarism* is when a student attempts to pass off work, written, performance or otherwise as their own, which is not their own without acknowledgement by the standard, recognised, means (e.g. references, footnotes, endnotes, picture captions). It may take the form of:
 - wholesale verbatim copying or insertion of multiple paragraphs of another person's work without acknowledgement (published or unpublished, from electronic sources or another student);
 - the close paraphrasing of another person's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without acknowledgement;
 - unacknowledged quotation of phrases from another person's work;
 - downloading or purchasing work from the internet;
 - resubmitting one's own work in its entirety (or substantial sections) which has previously been submitted for a different assessment or the same performance programme for more than one Principal Study assessment.
- *Collusion* occurs when a student submits, as entirely their own work, work which has been completed in unsanctioned collaboration with another student or a group of students, with the intention of improving the mark or grade of the individual or group. Students who collaborate with other students in the completion of work, which they know is intended to be submitted as that other student's own, will also be considered to have acted in collaboration.
- *Cheating* is to copy another student's work, or to have in possession, whether used or not, any unauthorised aids and/or materials belonging to other students (e.g. notes, essays) during the completion of an assessment.

- *Fabrication or Falsification* of data or results by individual students or groups of students is the presentation or inclusion in assessments of figures or data unsupported by verifiable or documented programmes of research; this may or may not additionally involve instances of plagiarism and/or of collusion.
- *Contracting* another person (fellow student or essay mill, etc.) to complete a piece of assessed work whereby that person does work on behalf of a student. This includes assessments undertaken for someone else in full or in part, including the sitting of assessments for someone else, and obtaining material from other students.
- *Ethical Misconduct* - any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in an assessment (including examinations/tests). This includes using artificial intelligence and text generation software (essay bots), and tools to generate work, unless it's use is designed into the assessment methodology and there is specific authorisation within the assessment brief.

Note: this is not an exhaustive list and other forms of malpractice may be considered under this policy at the discretion of the College.

College Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the College to ensure that all registered students are given ample opportunity to understand fully what comprises academic integrity, malpractice and the associated penalties.

Student Responsibility

It is the responsibility of students to act with integrity and take reasonable precautions to guard against unauthorised access by others to his/her work, both before and after assessment.

Where to go for Assistance

Students whose circumstances may affect, or may have affected, their performance should never seek to mitigate the effects through academic malpractice but should always bring their circumstances to the attention of the College at the earliest possible opportunity (e.g. through the Extenuating Circumstances application procedure) so that the College can, where appropriate, provide support, for example, via an appropriate concession such as allowing late submission of work or access to additional learning support etc.

Procedures for Dealing with Academic Malpractice

The College has three stages for dealing with suspected academic malpractice. The stage used will depend upon the nature and severity of the case, the year of study and whether the programme is undergraduate or postgraduate.

Students in their first year of an undergraduate programme may be considered under Stage 1, 2 or 3 procedures. Students in their 2nd or subsequent years of an undergraduate programme or postgraduate students will normally be automatically considered under the Stage 3 procedure for anything other than poor scholarship.

Academic Integrity: Procedure for the use of Turnitin

The College uses the plagiarism detection software package *Turnitin* to help determine whether a student is guilty of academic malpractice.

If a member of staff suspects academic malpractice, they will annotate the assessed work, highlighting passages suggestive of academic malpractice. The student will be asked to submit an electronic version of the assessment, which will be put through *Turnitin*. The *Turnitin* report will form part of the documentation considered by the Academic Malpractice Committee. Refusal to provide an electronic version of the word-processed document, on request, may result in a mark of 0% being awarded.

Stage 1: Module Level Consideration (UG1 only)

Minor cases of academic malpractice as a result of inadequate referencing/ poor academic practice (some copied material from sources which are cited but not in quotation marks, limited amount of material which is in the bibliography but without proper citation, some collaboration between students evidenced in structure and sources but original writing throughout) by undergraduate students which meet the criteria below will be considered by the relevant module tutor, who will consult, if necessary with the Module Coordinator:

- the student is in the first year of their programme;
- they are the first case brought to the attention of the College with regard to a particular undergraduate student;
- they clearly fall into the category of inadequate referencing/ poor academic practice;
- they involve no suspected borrowing from another student's work.

In such cases the tutor will advise the student of the problems of poor academic practice evidenced in the work, and may:

- Impose no penalty beyond a written warning on the student's file;
- reduce the mark by up to 10%, with acknowledgement of the reasons for the mark adjustment downwards included in feedback.

Decisions will be reported back to the next meeting of the Academic Malpractice Committee.

Stage 2: Programme Level Consideration (UG1 only)

More serious cases of academic malpractice (as opposed to inadequate referencing/ poor academic practice) by undergraduate first year student, who have no previous academic malpractice offences will be considered by the relevant Module Coordinator.

The Module Coordinator will interview the student(s) on behalf of the Programme Leader and in the presence of an Administrator who will record the meeting. The Module Coordinator will make a recommendation to the Academic Malpractice Committee on the penalty to be imposed based on the extent and seriousness of the offence as detailed below.

- Impose no penalty beyond a written warning on the student's file;
- Disregard the original assessment and require resubmission of the work without a cap;
- Disregard the original assessment and require resubmission of the work which will be capped at the pass mark;
- Award a mark of zero for the affected component of the assessment with no resubmission opportunity.

If the student does not admit to the offence, the Module Coordinator dealing with the matter will consider written or oral evidence as they think fit. The student will be given the opportunity to state his or her case prior to any decision being made.

Following the meeting of the Academic Malpractice Committee confirmation of the proposed penalty will be forwarded to the student in writing, suggesting that appropriate study skills advice must be sought from a designated member of academic staff, and warning of the consequences of a repeat offence. A copy of this communication will be placed on the student's file.

Stage 3: Consideration by Academic Malpractice Committee (all other cases, including serious UG1 cases)

If the student suspected of Academic Malpractice is an undergraduate in the second or subsequent years of a programme of study, or is a postgraduate, the case should be discussed by the Programme Leader with the staff member bringing forward the allegation. Where there is sufficient evidence of academic malpractice, as defined above, the Programme Leader will authorise the case to be referred to the Academic Malpractice Committee (that is, without interview or any other form of engagement with the student). This stage (3) will also apply to all cases where it is not the student's first offence, or to any other particularly serious or blatant cases (e.g. academic malpractice in several separate pieces of assessed work)

The Academic Malpractice Committee comprises the Academic Registrar (Chair), a Programme Leader (or Deputy) and the Head of Academic Quality and Standards. A Programme Administrator will be in attendance to record the meeting.

Prior to the meeting of the Academic Malpractice Committee, the Module Coordinator will complete and submit an 'Allegation of Academic Malpractice' pro forma to the Secretary, providing all relevant documentation.

The student against whom an allegation of academic malpractice has been made has the right to appear in person before the Academic Malpractice Committee and will be given at least five working days' notice of the meeting. Students attending a meeting of the Academic Malpractice Committee will be sent copies of all the documentation being considered in relation to the allegation of academic malpractice.

The student has the right to be accompanied by a fellow student, SU representative or member of staff, provided that the person in question is not a member of staff referred to in the Allegation of Academic Malpractice pro forma. Normally, the person accompanying the student will be allowed to speak at the student's request.

The Academic Malpractice Committee reserves the right to request that the internal assessor, or any other person(s) making the allegation of suspected academic malpractice, be available to attend any part of the meeting of the Academic Malpractice Committee where the case they have reported is being considered.

Penalties for Academic Malpractice

The tables below show the range of penalties that the Academic Malpractice Committee will normally recommend to the Board of Examiners. If a student has had a previous offence, the penalty imposed on a second offence will reflect this and be more severe. All proven cases of a “third offence” or more are normally treated automatically as grounds for termination of studentship. Students under these circumstances would still have the usual rights of appeal.

Criteria	Low level (1)	Medium level (2)	High level (3)
Experience of student: relates to the expectation that the student should be aware of the seriousness of their actions	For example: first year student; cultural considerations and/or mitigating circumstances; no previous academic malpractice offences	For example: students in subsequent year(s) of course but not final year; student has knowledge of academic malpractice; previous level 1 case detected	For example: experienced or final year student; student is expected to fully understand and demonstrate academic integrity; previous level 2 or level 3 case detected
Nature of academic malpractice	For example: referencing or attribution of work is not clear or is inadequate or has numerous errors; inappropriate paraphrasing	For example: failure to reference and/or cite sources; copying segments of other students' work or segments of work written by another person; copying fragments of material from websites, book or other publication	For example: fabricated references or citations; whole works copied from students or other published or unpublished sources; purchased assignment or assignment largely written by another person
Extent of academic malpractice	For example: few sentences, one paragraph;	For example: two or three paragraphs or a segment of work;	For example: significant appropriation of idea or artistic work; Multiple pages or sections of text copied
Intent of student to cheat by academic malpractice	For example: plagiarism and/or collusion appears unintentional or due to lack of knowledge; intent to cheat is unlikely or doubtful	For example: plagiarism appears as the result of negligence; intent to cheat is probable but cannot be substantiated	For example: plagiarism appears deliberate and planned; intent to cheat is evident and can be substantiated, e.g. use of an Essay Mill.

Indicative Penalty Ranges – Taught Students

Range of Penalties	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
	Warning on student's file	Resubmission of affected component with cap	Mark of zero awarded for whole module
	AND/OR	OR	OR
	Resubmission of affected component without cap	Mark of zero awarded for affected component but credits awarded	In the case of serial academic malpractice mark of zero awarded and termination of studentship
		OR	
		Mark of zero awarded for affected component and no credits awarded	

Indicative Penalty Ranges – Research Students

Type of Misconduct	Penalty
First offence	Allow revision and resubmission
Further offence - Minor	Academic assessment continues with the identified sections removed. The student has no opportunity to rewrite those sections.
Further offence - Major	Student deemed to have failed the programme.

Students should note that some assessment penalties, e.g. being awarded a mark of zero for the affected component, could result in them being unable to successfully complete the requirements of their programme.

Exceptionally, the Academic Malpractice Committee may recommend to Board of Examiners a reduction in degree classification or award or recommend to the Principal that the student(s) under consideration be expelled from the College in accordance with Student Conduct and Discipline Policy.

Notice in writing of the outcome of the Academic Malpractice Committee shall be sent by the Secretary to the student(s) concerned, normally within five working days of the Academic Malpractice Committee meeting.

Appeals against a decision of the Module Coordinator/ Academic Malpractice Committee

Students do not have the right to appeal against a recommendation of the Academic Malpractice Committee through the College's Academic Appeal Procedure.

Monitoring

The chair will be required to prepare an analysis and review of cases of academic malpractice on an annual basis to be considered by the Academic Malpractice Committee with a summary being presented to the Board of Examiners.