Edge Hill University

Research Degree Regulations 2026/27
Schedule B

Procedures relating to academic misconduct by postgraduate researchers

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1. Preamble

1.1. This document is an appendix to the *Research Degree Regulations* concerned with the investigation of academic misconduct in relation to research carried out for the award of MRes, PhD, professional doctorate or PhD by publication.

1.2. The Schedule is informed by the University's procedure relating to academic misconduct for taught degrees but differs in key areas to reflect the distinct nature of a research degree. This Schedule is also informed by the University's *Code of Practice for Research* and *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct*, which stipulates the behaviours and approaches required to conduct excellent research with integrity.

2. Definition of Misconduct

2.1. Misconduct may be broadly defined as an attempt to gain an advantage by the use of unfair and/or unacceptable methods. It is, however, important to note that the definitions and descriptions in this Schedule are indicative, not exhaustive, and the University reserves the right, where appropriate, to deem that misconduct has occurred in instances that are not explicitly defined in this document.

2.2. The use of generative artificial intelligence tools to assist in relation to some research-related tasks is not, in and of itself, misconduct. Nonetheless, use of generative artificial intelligence could lead to misconduct, even inadvertently. It is a matter of academic judgement whether any given use of generative artificial intelligence constitutes or leads to misconduct. Postgraduate researchers should, therefore, consult the University's guidance on generative artificial intelligence, discuss any use with their supervisors and consider it in light of the features of research misconduct. Any and all use of artificial intelligence of any kind should be explicitly declared in all research degree submissions and any outputs from that research. Supervisors should be made aware of any use of artificial intelligence.

2.3. Types of Misconduct:

- **fabrication**: this includes the creation of false data or other aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent;
- **falsification**: this includes the inappropriate manipulation and/or selection of data, imagery and/or consents;
- **plagiarism**: this includes the general misappropriation or use of others' ideas, intellectual property or work (written or otherwise),

without acknowledgement or permission. It may take the form of:

  - verbatim copying or insertion of another person's work (published or unpublished and including material freely available in electronic form) without appropriate acknowledgement;
  - the close paraphrasing of another person's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without appropriate acknowledgement;
  - unacknowledged quotation of phrases from another person's work;
  - the deliberate and detailed presentation of another person's thought as one's own.

- **misrepresentation, including:**
  - misrepresentation of data, for example suppression of relevant findings and/or data, or knowingly, recklessly or by gross negligence, presenting a flawed interpretation of data;
  - undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication;
  - misrepresentation of interests, including failure to declare material interests either of the researcher or of the funders of the research;
  - misrepresentation of qualifications and/or experience, including claiming or implying qualifications or experience which are not held;
  - misrepresentation of involvement, such as inappropriate claims to authorship and/or attribution of work where there has been no significant contribution, or the denial of authorship where an author has made a significant contribution.
- **failure to adhere to the University's Framework for Research Ethics**, including breach of duty of care, which involves deliberately, recklessly or by gross negligence:
  - disclosing improperly the identity of individuals or groups involved in research without their consent, or other breach of confidentiality;
  - placing any of those involved in research in danger, whether as subjects, participants or associated individuals, without their prior consent, and without appropriate safeguards even with consent; this includes reputational danger where that can be anticipated;

- not taking all reasonable care to ensure that the risks and dangers, the broad objectives and the sponsors of the research are known to participants or their legal representatives, to ensure appropriate informed consent is obtained properly, explicitly and transparently;
- not observing legal and reasonable ethical requirements or obligations of care for animal subjects, human organs or tissue used in research, or for the protection of the environment or cultural objects;
- improper conduct in peer review of research proposals or results (including manuscripts submitted for publication); this includes failure to disclose conflicts of interest; inadequate disclosure of clearly limited competence; misappropriation of the content of material; and breach of confidentiality or abuse of material provided in confidence for peer review purposes.

3. Procedure for dealing with academic misconduct in research degrees

3.1. The procedure consists of various stages which will be conducted in as timely a manner as possible but with sufficient time to allow a rigorous investigation, namely:

- any examination process will stop as soon as a suspicion of misconduct is raised. If that suspicion arises during examination the possibility of misconduct will form the recommendation to the Graduate School Board of Studies. The examiners may form a view in relation to a subsequent recommendation should misconduct be found not to have taken place, but that will not constitute a recommendation to the Graduate School Board of Studies while the question of whether misconduct has occurred remains unresolved. The Graduate School Board of Studies will make an academic judgement as to which individuals should be made aware of the suspicion and the process to be followed (for example, whether supervisors or examiners should be informed). Unless expressly required in any agreement, funders will not be notified until the matter has been resolved and then only if misconduct is established.
- establishing whether there is a case to answer;
- establishing a panel of inquiry, drawn from a standing panel;
- investigation by the panel;
- a meeting of the panel with the Postgraduate Researcher (PGR)

and a member of the professoriate charged by the Graduate School with responsibility for establishing whether there is a case to answer.

4. Establishing a case

4.1. Misconduct need not only be suspected by an examiner. When someone (examiner, supervisor, other member of University staff, etc.) suspects that an infringement has occurred, they will advise the Graduate School, which will request a formal report on the nature of the misconduct.

4.2. The report will be submitted to the Graduate School Board of Studies (GSBoS). It will appoint a member of the professoriate who is outside the department in which the PGR is based and is not a member of the supervisory team, to review the case to determine whether there appears to be a case to answer, i.e., that a case to answer has been 'established'.

4.3. Where it is determined that there is a case to answer, the Graduate School, will convene a panel of inquiry. The panel will comprise a chair (a dean or professor of the University) and two research active members of staff nominated by the Graduate School Board of Studies. No member of the panel will have had any previous involvement with the PGR, nor will they be drawn from the subject area in which the PGR's research is based. The secretary to the panel will be an appropriate Graduate School administrator, who will oversee the running of the panel. No other Graduate School team member is required for the panel.

4.4. The member of the professoriate who has established there is a case to answer will present the case to the panel of inquiry.

4.5. The panel will receive all the material available to the Board in order to complete its deliberations.

5. Misconduct panel of inquiry

5.1. Once a panel has been convened, the Graduate School will write to the PGR to inform them that there are suspicions of misconduct and that they are invited to attend a panel of inquiry.

5.2. The panel will meet as soon as possible and normally not later than six weeks from the date the PGR is invited to attend the panel of inquiry. To ensure a misconduct panel of inquiry is both rigorous and fair, there is often only a small number of people with appropriate expertise to serve as members of the panel. In some cases, and at certain times of the year, it may be longer before the panel can meet because of the availability of individuals. No reasonable delay of this kind shall be a basis for appeal or complaint.

5.3. The letter will include a copy of the regulations pertaining to academic misconduct in relation to research degrees. The PGR will have at least five days' notice of the meeting.

5.4. The Graduate School will make all reasonable efforts to provide the PGR with a copy of the original work in which the PGR is alleged to have committed academic misconduct and of any evidence in support of the case prior to the hearing. This may, however, not always be possible due to the volume of documentation or the nature of the alleged misconduct. Where it is not practicable to post case materials in advance, PGRs wishing to view such materials in advance of the hearing must contact the secretary to the panel to arrange a viewing. Contact details for the secretary will be made available on the initial letter from the Graduate School. Note that the opportunity to view the material in advance shall not delay the panel meeting and it is the responsibility of the PGR to ensure that they make themselves available in advance of the hearing should they wish to view this documentation. No documentation can be removed from the University premises during this viewing and a member of staff, who will normally be the secretary to the panel, will be in attendance at all times as an observer only.

5.5. The letter from the Graduate School will inform the PGR of their right to be accompanied by a 'friend.'[1] In exceptional cases the Chair of the Graduate School Board of Studies may agree to a person who is not a member of the Edge Hill community being in attendance to support the PGR.

5.6. If the PGR does not attend, and does not request the panel be adjourned, the meeting will go ahead in their absence. Equally, if the PGR does not give a reasonable explanation for non-attendance or in the view of the Graduate School Board of Studies the PGR unreasonably attempts to delay or further delay proceedings, the meeting may go ahead in the PGR's absence providing this is authorised directly by the Chair of the Graduate School Board of Studies.

5.7. The terms of reference for the Panel of Inquiry are:

- to investigate the allegation of misconduct, having regard to the evidence presented to it by the representative of the Graduate School and the PGR;
- to determine whether misconduct has occurred and, if so, the extent and severity of the misconduct;

[1] See Appendix 31 (of the general Academic Regulations): Role of a Student's Friend in Academic Conduct Procedures for full guidelines.

- in cases of proven misconduct, to determine its recommendations to the Graduate School Board of Studies (see section 6.1);
- to inform the Graduate School Board of Studies of its recommendations.

5.8. The Panel will normally conduct its hearing as follows:

- panel's private deliberation;[2]
- the chair will call for the PGR, 'friend' and the member of the professoriate presenting the case to enter the room;
- chair's introduction:
    - welcome and introduction of persons present
    - outline of the panel's remit
    - outline of procedure for the hearing
- the chair will call for the member of the professoriate who established that there is a case to answer to present the case and invite any persons present to ask relevant questions;
- the chair will invite the PGR to respond and invite any persons present to ask relevant questions;
- when the chair is satisfied that all relevant information has been provided, the chair will explain to the PGR that the panel will deliberate and the outcome will be communicated to the PGR by the Graduate School, in writing, normally within ten working days of the hearing. Reasonable delays necessary to ensure the rigour of the process shall not be grounds for appeal or complaint;
- the PGR, 'friend' and the member of the professoriate who presented the case will leave the meeting;
- panel's private deliberation: the decision of the panel, including that regarding the seriousness of the offence will be a matter of academic judgement.

6. Authorised penalties and guidance on sanctions

6.1. The following recommendations are available to the panel:

- The accusation is unfounded, and the PGR should be permitted to continue to examination without penalty, or, in cases where

[2] This does not include the Graduate School representative (member of the professoriate who established the case).

examination has already taken place, an alternative recommendation should be made by the examination panel to the Graduate School Board of Studies;

- The accusation is upheld and the PGR should be failed with an opportunity for retraining and resubmission under the re-examination regulations (section N18). (Note this recommendation is not available if the PGR is already registered for re-examination);

- The accusation is upheld and the PGR should be failed outright with a recommendation for exclusion.

6.2. The Graduate School will confirm the position of the PGR at the earliest opportunity and normally within ten working days of the hearing. Where any delay to that timeframe is necessary to ensure proper operation of the process that shall not be grounds for appeal or complaint.

6.3. Where evidence of academic misconduct becomes available subsequent to an award having been made or recommended by the examiners, the misconduct regulations will be invoked, and the original decision may be set aside (see also section A2.5 of the Academic Regulations).

6.4. PGRs who are deemed to have committed misconduct have a right of appeal under the Academic Appeals Procedures of the University (see Academic Regulations Appendices).

Endmatter

Information	Ownership/Review
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