NB: This guidance is supplementary to the Procedure for Assessment Irregularities. If there is any conflict between this guidance and the Procedure, the Procedure shall have precedence.

Further guidance (including guidance on academic sanctions) and frequently asked questions is also available at www.ncl.ac.uk/right-cite

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS AND THE ROLE OF A CHAIR OF BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

The Chair has 3 main tasks: (1) To investigate a report of an assessment irregularity. (2) To judge the case. (3) To communicate the decision.

Assessment Irregularities Procedure
A Diagramatic Overview of the steps for Chairs of Boards of Examiners.

1. Receive report from Marker
   
   1. Ask student to make written statement *
   2. Get witness statements (if appropriate)

   Judge

   2. Decide there is a prima facie case

   Interview Student

   Judge

   3. Decide that student is guilty of MINOR act of misconduct and that other conditions are met.

   Issue warning and academic consequences *

   1. Refer to Academic Registrar *
   2. Advise student *

Template emails are available at www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/examiners/AItemplates.htm
**THRESHOLDS**

The procedure makes clear that the definition of whether plagiarism is negligible, minor or major is to be determined by each Chair of the Board of Examiners. Each case must be judged on its merits with due regard to the extent of the irregularity, the weight of the assessment, the instructions provided to students and the experience of the student. However, care should be taken to ensure some reasonable standard across the University. The following are guidelines (that must not be treated as rules) to help Chairs determine the extent of plagiarism.

**Negligible:** Normally, this may be plagiarism constituting no more than 5% within an overall assignment worth up to 20 credits. In such cases, it may not be appropriate to pursue disciplinary action further but to issue a Formal Caution in terms of paragraph 2(e).

A **Minor** assessment irregularity. Normally, this may be an assessment irregularity that constitutes more than 5% of the piece of work but less than 40% of a 10 credit module (or the equivalent), or relates to a piece of work worth more than 20 credits. A Formal Written Warning* should be issued and academic consequences determined, including (if appropriate) the requirement to resubmit. cf. Paragraph 2(f). NB: each case must be judged on its merits and Chairs of Boards of Examiners may find it helpful to note that the OED definition of minor is ‘the lesser part’.

* A Chair of the Board of Examiners should not issue a Final Written Warning.

More detailed ‘Guidance on Academic Sanctions’ is available on the Right-Cite web pages at [www.ncl.ac.uk/right-cite/Staff/](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/right-cite/Staff/).

An assessment irregularity ought normally to be treated as **not minor** if it amounts to 40% or more of a 10 credit module (or the equivalent).

**CONDUCT OF HEARINGS**

It is important that hearings are conducted fairly, with students being shown all relevant evidence and being accompanied by a friend/supporter if they so wish. This includes meetings between the student and the School / academic unit.
OTHER NOTES

- It is a standard principle of civil justice that a specific allegation relating to one matter cannot justify an open ended search for other matters. Retrospective examination of work already submitted, marked and returned is not generally permitted*. For example, if an irregularity is discovered for a student in a semester 2 assignment, you should not re-evaluate assignments submitted and marked in semester 1. Do not go fishing!

  * There are exceptions to this. If the investigation into the matter in hand reveals evidence of wrong-doing beyond that matter, then such evidence cannot be suppressed. For example, if the student openly admits that they have plagiarised previous work you cannot ignore this. If an apparent irregularity is discovered by an external examiner or if another student makes a specific allegation, it is permissible to investigate. Please contact Student Progress Service for assistance in these circumstances.

- Do not give a mark to a student on the particular assignment until the case is concluded.
  - You should withdraw the mark, either by not releasing the mark for the student under suspicion or by temporarily deleting the mark. The disciplinary investigation overrides the institutional commitment to release marks within a given time-frame. However you should explain to the student that no mark has been released because of an investigation into a possible assessment irregularity.
  - In any hearing, a student is entitled to see the evidence against them, and that might entail showing them a script with a mark on it. In such cases the entitlement to see the evidence overrides the instruction not to give the mark.
  - In the event that a mark is released before the conclusion of an investigation, there is no breach of a legal principle. However, if the outcome of the case involves a reduction in marks you will need to explain this carefully to the student.

FURTHER ADVICE

This document has been prepared by the Head of the Student Progress Service, in consultation with the Disciplinary Convenor. If you require further advice, please contact a member of the Student Progress Service (casework@ncl.ac.uk). Other contact details are available at www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress

Please also refer to www.ncl.ac.uk/right-cite - staff resources - for further information about managing correct academic practice in the University. The frequently asked questions may be particularly helpful.
TEMPLATE LETTERS

Template letters are provided for Chairs of Boards of Examiners to adapt by amending the highlighted yellow sections. The following templates are available at www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/examiners/Altemplates.htm

(A) Advising the student of a potential assessment irregularity and requesting a written statement and interview. [cf para 2(a)]

(B) Dismissing an allegation. [cf para 2(b) and cf para 2(d)]

(C) An advisory note when an irregularity has occurred but is deemed to be negligible and no further action is to be taken. [cf para 2(e)]

(D) A written warning and possibly a reduced mark. [cf para 2(f)]

(E) A written warning, a requirement to resubmit and possibly a reduced mark. [cf para 2(f)]

(F) Advising the student of the referral to the Student Progress Service. [cf para 2(g)]

(G) Referring the case to Student Progress Service. [cf para 2(g)]

(H) Issue a caution if you spot a potential assessment irregularity in a piece of formative work.