

Quick guide to Assessment Offences

What is an Assessment Offence?

Assessment Offences are any actions that would give a student an unfair advantage over other students in any element of assessment — including coursework, exams, group work and presentations. Assessment offences include examination offences (e.g. bringing in unauthorised notes, mobile phones, smart watches etc.); plagiarism (e.g. quoting from texts without attributing the quotes, or otherwise presenting other people's words or work as your own); and collusion (e.g. purchasing an essay from an essay mill). Assuming a false identity in the examination room, including unauthorised members in student teams for group work, or intimidating an invigilator can also constitute assessment offences.

Who will deal with an allegation of academic misconduct?

The College has an [Assessment Offences Policy](#) under which all student assessment offences will be dealt with. If it is your first offence, any type of assessment offence can be dealt with by your department, who will organise a hearing or apply an appropriate penalty for your misconduct. If you committed an examination offence, the Academic Registrar or their nominee will be informed of this offence, and will make a decision as to whether your case should be heard at College or Departmental level. Where a sufficiently serious offence has been committed, or the offence is a student's third or more offence, your offence will be dealt with by the College.

I have been accused of an assessment offence. What happens next?

You will receive a formal communication from either your Department or the Registry, explaining what offence you are suspected to have committed and what will happen next. If it is your first offence, your department may write to you to explain the penalty you are getting. If it is not your first offence you will normally be invited to either admit the offence in writing, or to attend a Panel hearing to discuss the allegation.

What should I do if I am called to attend a panel?

If you are invited to attend a panel, please inform the person organising the panel of the dates when you are available to attend. If you cannot or do not want to attend, you may send in a written statement for the panel to read. What you present to the panel (in writing or in person) is an opportunity for you to respond to the allegation in your own words and provide any information which you think may be relevant. The panel will ask you questions about anything that is unclear. You will then be asked to leave the room whilst the panel make their decision.

Can I bring someone with me to the Panel?

Yes, you are entitled to be accompanied by another Birkbeck student, a Birkbeck member of staff, or the Students Union Advisor. This person is allowed to observe the panel, take notes, and speak on your behalf. They are not allowed to contribute to the hearing unless the panel members invite them to. They also do not have a say in the outcome of the hearing.

When will I receive a response?

The College will inform you by email of the outcome of any hearing as soon as possible, and no later than 14 days after the hearing is held. You may receive the outcome of the hearing and the penalty first, and then get the full report of the hearing within 14 days after the hearing.

What are the possible penalties?

A full list of penalties can be found in the [Assessment Offences Policy](#) — penalties for Departmental panels are listed under point 22, and penalties for College-level panels are listed under point 31. Penalties range from a formal warning to termination of your registration as a Birkbeck student.

What if I'm not happy with the panel's decision?

If after a panel hearing you think the panel's decision is excessive, not in line with the Assessment Offences Policy, or unreasonable given the evidence of the case, you can request a review of the decision. Any request for review must be made within 14 days of receiving the panel outcome. Requests should be sent to the Academic Registrar who will consider whether the case should be re-heard with a different panel. If you exhaust the College's internal procedures and remain dissatisfied you will be given a Completion of Procedures letter which enables you to pursue the matter with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE), should you wish to do so.