

PGR Academic and Research Integrity Policy

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Date of Approval: 28 November 2024

Date of Review: 30 September 2026

Approving Body: Senate

Version 2.1

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Policies and Procedures referred to in this document can be located in the [Policy Library](#).

The University of Chester requires that students undertaking a programme leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree create work that is substantially a product of their own original research and writing. It further requires that any research undertaken by students of the University is conducted ethically and with due regard to all applicable policies and procedures. Failure to adhere to these principles may constitute a breach of academic and research integrity. Where there is any suspicion that a student may be in breach of the PGR academic and research integrity policy, at any point during their period of registration or following the conferment of a postgraduate research degree, the procedure outlined below will be followed.

1. Introduction to the PGR Academic and Research Integrity Procedure

- 1.1. This procedure relates to students registered on the programmes listed in the [Postgraduate Research Degrees Policy](#).
- 1.2. Where a breach of academic and research integrity is alleged in work submitted for assessment in a module designated as 'taught' (for example, those relating to programmes leading to the award of a professional doctoral degree or a Master by Research degree), the procedure outlined in the Academic Conduct Policy shall apply.
- 1.3. In the event of a dispute about the designation of a module or whether the student is at either the taught or research stage of a programme, and therefore which procedure shall apply, the Academic Registrar shall make a determination. That decision shall be final.
- 1.4. Throughout this procedure, the term 'work' refers to any documents, artefacts, presentations, performances, publications or other material that a student registered on a programme leading

to the award of a postgraduate research degree might produce during the course of their registration which is purported to be a product of their research and/or preparation for examination.

- 1.5. Any investigations that may be carried out to gather evidence of violations of academic and research integrity under this procedure will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the Procedure of the Investigation of Research Misconduct, published by the UK Research Integrity Office.
- 1.6. For the purposes of this procedure, a student will be regarded as being in breach of the PGR Academic and Research Integrity Policy if they act or behave in a manner that is inconsistent with the definitions of Academic and Research Integrity given in 2.1.
- 1.7. Throughout these procedures, where reference is made to specific post-holders, the line manager of that post-holder may nominate another person to act instead.
- 1.8. Throughout these procedures, indicative timescales are given in calendar days. However, where a deadline (either for the appellant or for the University) falls on a Saturday, Sunday, English Bank Holiday or any other day that the University is closed, the deadline is extended to 2pm the next weekday (i.e. Monday – Friday).

2. Maintaining Academic and Research Integrity

2.1. In order to adhere to the University's definition of academic and research integrity, students are expected to abide by the following conventions when completing work during their period of registration:

- 2.1.1. Acknowledge all sources of information, knowledge and ideas used when completing work for submission by consistently and correctly using an acceptable referencing system;
- 2.1.2. Produce work that is the product of their own, individual efforts. An exception to this is where a piece of work is the result of a joint or combined research effort (such as, for example, a jointly authored research paper), whereby all contributing parties should be appropriately acknowledged;
- 2.1.3. Declare whether they have used work before in a previous research output or submission (whether successful or not) using an acceptable referencing system;
- 2.1.4. Present accurate information and data that has been obtained appropriately and which is a fair representation of their own endeavours, knowledge and understanding;
- 2.1.5. Adhere and comply with all applicable regulatory, legal and professional obligations and ethical requirements therein.

- 2.2. The University will make information on how to maintain academic and research integrity available to students in ways that are appropriate and accessible. However, at all times, it is the sole responsibility of the student to act in a way that is consistent with the principles set out in 2.1. and to seek advice and guidance if they are unclear.
- 2.3. The University draws no distinction between those who knowingly engaged in a practice constituting a breach of academic and research integrity and those who may have done so inadvertently by means of careless scholarship.

3. Allegations of Breaches of Academic and Research Integrity

- 3.1. Allegations of a student registered for a programme leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree being in breach of academic and research integrity may be submitted by any member of the University, Examiner, research sponsor, research participant, member of the public or organisation.
- 3.2. Allegations should normally be made in writing to the relevant Head of Division or School as soon as possible after suspicion arises. Any delays in reporting should be explained. If the complainant is unable to ascertain who the relevant Head of Division or School is, the allegation should be sent directly to the Deputy Head of Academic Services who shall forward the complaint.
- 3.3. Allegations should contain as much evidence as is available to the complainant.
- 3.4. The identity of the complainant will, as far as possible, remain confidential throughout the initial stages of investigation.
- 3.5. Allegations of breaches of academic and research integrity may arise from the conduct of the student and/or in relation to work created by the student. For example, this might include:
- 3.5.1. Material created by the student for dissemination either internally or externally, where the student identifies that work as being produced as a result of research or scholarly activity being undertaken as part of their programme of study.
 - 3.5.2. Work submitted as part of the annual progress monitoring cycle.
 - 3.5.3. Thesis/dissertation/performance/exhibition presented for examination.
- 3.6. The University reserves the right to initiate an investigation, even if there is no specific complainant, but where there exists good cause to suspect that a breach of academic and research integrity might have occurred.
- 3.7. At any stage during a student's period of registration, the relevant Head of Division or School, or the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation), may require an electronic copy of any written work be submitted for originality checking via Turnitin.

- 3.8. Where a student is required to submit an electronic copy of their written work, failure to do so in a format that can be accepted by Turnitin for the purposes of originality checking, may constitute a disciplinary matter.
- 3.9. Where the allegation arises during the course of the examination process, the examination shall be suspended and the matter reported to the Head of Division or School. The point at which this occurs shall be determined by the Examiners alone:
- 3.9.1. In the event that a breach of academic and research integrity is suspected **prior to the conduct of the *viva voce***, the Examiners may either suspend the examination at that point, or may continue with the *viva voce* if they are of the opinion that the candidate may be able to explain the aspects of their work which are thought to be problematic.
 - 3.9.2. In the event that a breach of academic and research integrity is suspected **during the conduct of the *viva voce***, the Examiners shall determine an appropriate point at which to conclude proceedings and suspend the examination.
 - 3.9.3. Irrespective of the point at which the examination is suspended, the Examiners shall refrain from making any recommendation as to the outcome of the examination.

4. Academic Division Procedures

- 4.1. The Head of Division or School will consider any allegation of a breach of academic and research integrity and give preliminary consideration as to whether there is sufficient concern to warrant further investigation.
- 4.2. The Head of Division or School may, if they wish, require the student to submit an electronic copy of any written work for the purposes of originality checking via Turnitin (see 3.7. and 3.8.). Such a request will be without prejudice to the decision on whether to undertake further investigation.
- 4.3. The Head of Division or School will determine whether there is, *prima facie*, evidence of a breach of academic and research integrity in the work. They may take advice from any member of the University to make such a determination. Where the Head of Division or School believes that such evidence does exist, the student will be invited to discuss the matter.
- 4.4. Following the meeting with the student, the Head of Division or School will decide whether or not to refer the matter to the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel. Where the matter is referred, the Head of Division or School will:
- 4.4.1. Write to the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) and request the convening of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel;

- 4.4.2. Provide a written report for the attention of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel outlining the nature of the allegation and the actions taken in respect of it; and
- 4.4.3. Supply a copy of any evidence used to substantiate the allegation.
- 4.5. In cases of plagiarism, where identical or very similar source material can be found in more than one location, an example source shall be regarded as evidence.
- 4.6. Where the allegation has arisen during the course of the examination process, the Head of Division or School shall, in every case, refer the matter to the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel following the procedure outlined at 4.4.

5. PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel

- 5.1. Cases referred to the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel (the Panel) will normally be scheduled for hearing within **28 days** of the request for the convening of a meeting.
- 5.2. The student shall be informed of the date of the hearing as soon as reasonably practical and, in all cases, will be given no less than **7 days'** notice.
- 5.3. The student shall be informed of their right to appear before the Panel and/or submit a written statement to be circulated to members of the Panel in advance of the hearing.
- 5.4. No less than **7 days** prior to the hearing, the student will be provided with a copy of the report of the Head of Division or School and any other documents submitted to the Panel. At the same time, the student shall also be notified of the names of any individuals invited to attend the hearing (see 5.13.)
- 5.5. If further evidence of a breach of academic and research integrity comes to light before or during the hearing, but after the initial disclosure of evidence to the student, the University reserves the right to take this additional evidence into account. Where this happens, the student must be provided with a copy of the additional evidence against them and be given an appropriate amount of time to prepare a defence should they wish to do so.
- 5.6. Other than through the presentation of their defence via the means explained in this procedure, students against whom an allegation has been made, or any other individual, must not seek to influence the Chair or members of the Panel or in any other way seek to sway the operation of the procedure described here. Any attempt to do so may constitute a disciplinary matter.
- 5.7. Neither the University nor the student may be legally represented at meetings of the Panel.
- 5.8. The student may be accompanied by a member of the University of Chester, who should normally be either a fellow student or an officer of Chester Students' Union. The name and status of any person accompanying the student must be notified to the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) no less than **2 days** prior to the hearing.

- 5.9. The student shall respond to the allegation personally and cannot delegate the response to a third party, nor shall a third party be permitted to attend the hearing on behalf of a student without their presence. No discussions will be entered into with a third party about the matter. Notwithstanding this, where the student is accompanied at the hearing in accordance with 5.8., the Chair of the Panel has discretion to permit that person to make a statement on behalf of the student.
- 5.10. The PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel will be composed as follows:
- 5.10.1. A Chair, who will normally be a Dean or an Associate Dean; and
 - 5.10.2. Two members of academic staff, at least one of whom shall appear on the Accredited PGR Supervisor List and neither of whom shall be from the division(s) in which the student's supervisors are based.
- 5.11. The Deputy Head of Academic Services (or nominee) shall appoint a procedural advisor who shall also take a formal record of proceedings, but who shall not be a member of the Panel.
- 5.12. The Panel shall be deemed quorate when 100% of the membership is present.
- 5.13. Prior to the hearing, the Chair of the Panel shall normally request the attendance of the Head of Division or School and, where appropriate:
- 5.13.1. The internal examiner;
 - 5.13.2. Witnesses to any alleged breach of academic and research integrity;
 - 5.13.3. The complainant.

6. Conduct of the Hearing

- 6.1. The student may request a postponement of the hearing on one occasion only and for good cause. Such a request must be submitted to the Chair of the Panel via the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) no less than **24 hours** prior to the meeting.
- 6.2. Where the student fails to notify of their intention to attend by a deadline stipulated, or having given notice of their intention to attend, fails to do so, the hearing will normally go ahead in their absence.
- 6.3. The student may request that the hearing goes ahead in their absence.
- 6.4. In the event that a hearing has been conducted in the student's absence, where the student is later able to demonstrate good cause for their absence and failure to notify the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) in advance of the meeting, the Chair of the Panel has discretion to void any decisions made and convene a fresh meeting.

6.5. All hearings will normally take place online via Microsoft Teams, unless the Chair of the Panel requires the hearing to be in person, or where Disability and Inclusion (Student Services) declare it is required as a reasonable adjustment.

6.6. The hearing will normally be conducted in two parts:

6.6.1. The first part shall be devoted to the presentation of the case, the hearing of the defence and questioning of relevant individuals. A recording of the first part shall normally be made.

6.6.2. The second part shall be devoted to the deliberation of the Panel. The second part shall be conducted in private with only the Panel members and procedural advisor present. Only a written record shall normally be made.

6.7. If further evidence has come to light before or during the hearing which the student has not been provided with previously or has had insufficient time to consider it, the Chair of the Panel shall normally adjourn the hearing to a later date.

7. Decisions of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel

7.1. In respect of each allegation, the Panel shall determine either that it has been proven or not proven.

Allegations that are not proven

7.2. If an allegation of a breach of academic and research integrity is found not proven, no penalty shall apply and the student must be returned to the position they were in before the allegation was made. The mechanism for doing this may vary depending on the stage that the student was at when the complaint was received.

7.3. Where the complaint **did not originate from the annual progress monitoring procedures, nor the examiners**, the student shall receive a letter from the Chair of the Panel confirming the decision. The Panel shall normally invite the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) to consider whether it would be appropriate to permit an extension to the student's registration at least equivalent in length to the period of time between the submission of the complaint and the decision of the Panel.

7.4. Where the complaint **originated from the annual progress monitoring procedures**, the student shall receive a letter from the Chair of the Panel confirming the decision. Where appropriate, the student shall be given the opportunity to submit a new annual progress report for scrutiny. The Panel shall normally invite the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) to consider whether it would be appropriate to permit an extension to the student's registration at least equivalent in length to the period of time between the submission of the complaint and the decision of the Panel.

7.5. Where the complaint **originated from the examiners**, the student shall receive a letter from the Chair of the Panel confirming the decision and the examination shall recommence. The Panel shall also normally recommend to the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor that new examiners should be nominated in accordance with the procedure set out in the PGR Appointment of Examiners And Conduct of Viva Policy.

7.6. Where the complaint was made following the conferment of a degree, the graduate shall receive a letter from the Chair of the Panel confirming the decision.

Allegations that are proven

7.7. If an allegation of a breach of academic and research integrity is found proven, the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel shall determine an appropriate penalty. Such a penalty shall normally be determined by the stage that the student was at when the complaint was received.

7.8. In each case, where an allegation is found proven, on the advice of the Panel, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) shall issue a final written warning which may include any or all of the following (this shall not apply if the Panel recommends that the student's registration be terminated):

- 7.8.1. A requirement to undertake some specified training;
- 7.8.2. A requirement to comply with additional supervision requirements as specified by the Panel;
- 7.8.3. A requirement to undertake actions specified by the Panel to compensate for harm;
- 7.8.4. A requirement to use their best endeavours to retract their publications.

7.9. Where the complaint **did not** originate from the examiners, the Panel may:

- 7.9.1. (in addition to the final writing warning at 7.8.) recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards and Progression Board that the student, registered on a programme leading to the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, **not be permitted to upgrade their registration to a programme leading to the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**; or
- 7.9.2. (in addition to the final writing warning at 7.8.) recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards and Progression Board that the student, registered on a programme leading to the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, **have their registration downgraded to a programme leading to the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy and not be permitted to reapply for an upgrade at a later date**; or
- 7.9.3. (in addition to the final writing warning at 7.8.) recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards and Progression Board that the student, registered on a programme leading to the award of a **professional doctoral degree**, **not be permitted to progress to, or continue with, the research phase and be limited to the award of**

the degree of Master of Professional Studies, should they obtain sufficient credits within the maximum registration period permitted; or

- 7.9.4. recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards and Progression Board that the student's registration be terminated.
- 7.10. In addition to the provisions of 7.9., where the complaint originated from the annual progress monitoring process or the confirmation of target award process, if the Panel does not recommend the termination of the student's registration, it shall normally instruct the student to withdraw the piece of work in question and refer the matter back to the Independent Progress Assessment Panel.
- 7.11. Where the complaint **originated from the examiners**, the Panel may:
- 7.11.1. recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board that the candidate be permitted to **make alterations to the thesis and re-present it for examination**. This outcome may only apply if, in the opinion of the Panel, the evidence presented makes it reasonable to assume that the allegation has arisen because of minor oversight and/or poor academic practice on the part of the candidate which can be easily rectified, normally within no more than **one month**;
 - 7.11.2. recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board that the outcome of the examination should be to permit the candidate to undertake **substantial revisions to the work and to make an application for the award on one occasion only**, provided that the application is made no later than **one calendar year** from the date of the formal notification of the outcome;
 - 7.11.3. recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board that the outcome of the examination should be to permit the candidate to undertake **substantial revisions to the work and to make an application for the degree of Master of Philosophy with a further viva examination**, on one occasion only, provided that the application is made no later than **one calendar year** from the date of the formal notification of the outcome; or
 - 7.11.4. recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board that **the student's registration be terminated**. In the case of a student registered for a professional doctoral degree, the Panel may determine their entitlement to the degree of Master of Professional Studies in the event that the candidate has already obtained sufficient credits.
- 7.12. In all cases where the Panel determines an outcome described in 7.11 the normal expectation is that the original Examination Panel will be invited to re-examine the candidate. However, at its discretion and providing sufficient justification, the Panel may recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board that the original Examination Panel be dissolved and new examiners appointed in accordance with the procedure outlined in this the PGR Appointment of Examiners and Conduct of Viva Policy. Where this occurs, the Panel shall normally also recommend that the new Examination Panel only be informed that it is examining a resubmission, but not the reasons for that resubmission.

- 7.13. Where the complaint was made following the conferment of a degree, a report shall be made to Senate which may have recourse to the power to revoke the degree in accordance with the *Principles and Regulations*.

Disciplinary matters

- 7.14. Irrespective of whether or not the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel finds an allegation proven, where it considers that the student's actions or inactions may have brought the University into disrepute, it may refer the matter to the University Proctor for consideration under disciplinary procedures.
- 7.15. In instances where an allegation of a breach of academic and research integrity is found to have been proven, the decision to refer the matter to the University Proctor may be in addition to or in place of an academic penalty.

8. Appeals against decisions of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel

- 8.1. The decisions of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel are ones of academic judgement. A student or graduate may not therefore appeal against the decision on the ground of disagreement with the Panel's decision.
- 8.2. The grounds for appeal and the procedure to be followed is outlined in the PGR Academic Appeal Procedure.