1. **PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

   The purpose of this paper is to seek the approval of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) for an amendment to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic).

2. **PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY / FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

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<th>Board/Committee</th>
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<td>Previously considered/approved by:</td>
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<td>Academic Policy and Regulations Group (APRG)</td>
<td>2 May 2024</td>
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<td>Further consideration/approval required by:</td>
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<td>Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)</td>
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3. **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

   Members of the QAC are asked to approve the amendment to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) as outlined in section 4.4.

4. **DISCUSSION**

   4.1 The **Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic)** sets out the University’s approach to the handling of Academic Misconduct by students. The Code, approved by the University’s Senate and Court, provides information on the types of offences which may occur (e.g., plagiarism or contract cheating), the processes for handling alleged instances of Academic Misconduct (within Schools and, where appropriate, centrally) and the penalties to be imposed where an allegation is proven. The Code applies to all students undertaking their studies with the University.

   4.2 On occasion, however, a Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Body (PSRB) may regulate a course, programme or element of assessment and, in so doing, impose more stringent regulations in regard to Academic Misconduct and/or provide more detailed information in regard to what may constitute Academic Misconduct.

   4.3 One such example is the UK Medical Licensing Assessment regulated by the General Medical Council (GMC). In this scenario the requirements are evidenced by a Policy Framework, the final version of which is expected to be published shortly, drafted by the General Medical Council (GMC) in respect of the Applied Knowledge Test (AKT), an element of assessment comprising
part of the Medical Licensing Assessment (MLA), required to be undertaken by students registered for the Degree of MChB. The draft framework provides guidance in respect of Academic Misconduct as outlined in Appendix A. While this document is predominantly aligned with the University's own definitions in regard to misconduct, it sets out specific expectations of students undertaking the AKT, the detail of which would not be appropriately reflected the Code of Practice governing all students.

4.4 On this basis, therefore, members of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) are asked to consider and, if appropriate, approve an amendment to the University's Code of Practice on Student Discipline as detailed below, to reflect the fact that, in some instances, there may be more stringent regulations / expectations placed on students, as a consequence of PSRB requirements. In addition, an Annex will be appended to the Code, detailing the instances in which such more stringent regulations apply.

*Within Section 1, 'Purpose of Code’ insert:*

*Students undertaking courses, programmes and / or elements of assessment subject to the requirements of a Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Body (PSRB), may be subject to an additional regulatory framework in respect of Academic Misconduct. Where these regulations are more stringent than those stipulated within the University's own regulations, those of the PSRB will take priority. Frameworks which exist in this regard are listed in Appendix C, and will be widely publicised to the students concerned.*

5. **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement ([s.tucker@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:s.tucker@abdn.ac.uk)), Gillian Mackintosh, Director of Academic Services and Online Education ([g.mackintosh@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:g.mackintosh@abdn.ac.uk)) or Emma Tough, Assistant Registrar ([e.tough@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:e.tough@abdn.ac.uk)).

18 April 2024

**Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open**
Examination misconduct

Purpose

In relation to the AKT, this policy sets out:

- Universities’ expectations of candidates’ professional behaviour
- what universities mean by examination misconduct
- how concerns about suspected examination misconduct by UK medical students will be dealt with
- penalties for examination misconduct.
- How information about exam misconduct will be shared with MSC and GMC

Universities’ and the GMC’s expectations of candidates’ professional behaviour

The AKT is an exam quality assured by the GMC. Both universities and the GMC require all candidates to act professionally in relation to the AKT. Unprofessional behaviour, such as cheating or gaining an unfair advantage, would undermine confidence in the AKT.

Fitness to practise at the point of registration

Medical students with a UK primary medical qualification are entitled to provisional registration and a licence to practise if their fitness to practise is not impaired.

Examination misconduct in relation to the AKT may bring into question a candidate’s fitness to practise as such behaviour falls below the standards of professional behaviour that the GMC and universities expect.

The GMC expects doctors to act with honesty and integrity

Patients must be able to trust doctors with their lives and health. To justify that trust, all doctors registered with the GMC must show respect for human life and make sure their conduct and practice meet the standards the GMC has set out in its core guidance, *Good medical practice*. In relation to acting with honesty and integrity, the GMC says that all registered doctors must make sure their conduct justifies their patients’ trust in them and the public’s trust in the profession*.

The GMC and MSC guidance for medical students, *Achieving good medical practice*, shows how *Good medical practice* applies to them as students. Medical students are expected to mature while they are at medical school and learn about professionalism as they progress through their course. Understanding how the GMC’s core guidance for doctors applies during their course and in their future careers helps them be good students and, in the future, good doctors.

* Paragraph 65 of *Good medical practice*
The GMC and MSC make clear in *Achieving good medical practice* that medical students are expected to act with integrity. The guidance highlights, in the section Professionalism – key areas for concern, that cheating and plagiarism, including sharing the details of questions or tasks from exams, are behaviours that may lead to FTP action being taken against students.

**What universities mean by examination misconduct**

In relation to the AKT, the following non-exhaustive list of behaviours may be considered to be unprofessional as they fall below the standards the GMC and universities expect; and, if proven, could amount to examination misconduct:

- Sharing, or attempting to share, any AKT exam content not published as formative material by, including on social media and other online fora
- not complying with the reasonable instructions of an invigilator or other examination official
- viewing, or attempting to view, the work of another candidate
- removing, or attempting to remove, materials or content (including through the use of recording devices) from an examination other than those specifically permitted
- attempting to take the exam using a different exam browser than the one mandated by the medical school to lockdown the online exam environment securely.
- bringing, or attempting to bring, materials or devices (including internet-enabled devices) other than those specifically permitted into the examination
- releasing, or attempting to release, any AKT exam content not published as formative material to other candidates, a third party/commercial organisation
- communicating, or attempting to communicate, with other candidates while under examination conditions
- gaining, or attempting to gain, information about the examination questions, other than any in the public domain, in advance of an examination date
- impersonating, or attempts to impersonate, a candidate
- bribery or attempted bribery (of another candidate, examination official or other relevant person)
- disruptive behaviour during an exam
- aiding or abetting, or attempting to aid or abet, any of the above.

**How concerns about suspected examination misconduct will be dealt with**

*How examination misconduct is detected*

In relation to the AKT, suspected examination misconduct may be detected and reported by:
• invigilators
• candidates
• university staff or other persons responsible for delivering the AKT in the UK or overseas at campuses of UK universities
• any other person who becomes aware of suspected examination misconduct and
• any software used by MSC Assessment or the university to detect cheating during the AKT.

Anonymous reports of examination misconduct will only normally be acted on if there is supporting evidence. However, medical schools will investigate any information about examination misconduct brought to their attention.

**Examination misconduct**

Any suspected examination misconduct by a UK medical student will be dealt with under the medical school’s or parent university’s procedures for investigating and dealing with examination misconduct, unprofessional student behaviour or fitness to practise issues.

The release of scores to students may be delayed if a medical school is investigating a potential instance of exam misconduct.

This is so that a holistic approach to a medical student’s fitness to practise is taken and any previous instances of examination misconduct, fitness to practise history and/or unprofessional behaviours are taken into account.

**Sharing information about exam misconduct**

If a medical school suspects exam misconduct they may need to get in touch with MSC to get technical reports as to any anomalies detected by the exam delivery platform or an early indication of the candidate’s score. In these instances it is likely that a student will need to be named so that an investigation can take place.

In all other circumstances medical schools need not identify individual students but should supply MSC with;

• details of suspected examination misconduct during the AKT in the exam report they will submit to the MSC.
• Details of any concerns about examination misconduct that arise following submission of their exam report.
• The outcome of any investigations

This information must be shared to allow MSC to maintain the integrity of the items
used in the AKT, improve the security of the online delivery platform where necessary and fulfil its obligation to GMC with respects to quality assurance of the AKT.

Medical schools should ensure that any suspected examination misconduct (whether during or after the AKT) is dealt with through their or their university’s procedures for dealing with concerns about examination misconduct, professional behaviours or fitness to practise (whichever is appropriate). Details of any investigation will be submitted to the GMC as part of the provisional registration process.

If MSC becomes aware, through any means including software designed to identify collusion, that any exam misconduct may have occurred it will inform medical schools of the nature of the suspected misconduct, the names of the students involved and all the information needed for a medical school to investigate through its’ own processes.

MSC will provide GMC with details of any instances of exam misconduct detected through internal processes described above and any steps taken to address these as part of annual report submitted at the end of the assessment cycle.

**Penalties for examination misconduct**

In relation to their students, medical schools and/or universities will apply penalties for AKT examination misconduct applicable under their procedures for dealing with concerns about examination misconduct, professional behaviours and/or fitness to practise (whichever is appropriate). If a students fitness to practice is brought into question as a result of alleged misconduct in relation to the AKT it may not be possible for the university to graduate students and or for the GMC to register and provide a licence to practice.

*Declaring findings of examination misconduct*

In relation to the AKT, UK medical students must declare any findings of examination misconduct and any penalty applied when they apply for GMC provisional or full registration with a licence to practise.