

**For the Academic Policy &
Regulations Committee**

University of Birmingham

**Changes to Regulations and the Code of Practice on Centrally Co-ordinated
Formal Written Examinations Relating to Examination Irregularities**

Topic and Purpose of Paper

1. APRC is requested to **approve** changes to Regulations and the Code of Practice on Centrally Co-ordinated Formal Written Examinations which are designed to clarify the University's procedures regarding Examination Irregularities.

Consultation

2. The following proposals have been developed by members of the Student Conduct and Appeals section and the Examinations and Congregations Office within Academic and Student Administration. They have in turn taken feedback on the problems with Examination Irregularities from colleagues in Colleges who act as Senior Invigilators and on Investigating Committees.

Proposals

3. That the following new clause be added into Regulations as Regulation 5.2.10 (d) (with subsequent renumbering of current clauses 5.2.10 (d)-(f) as 5.2.10 (e)-(g)):

If a Registered Student's likeness on the University Identity Card becomes unrecognisable through changes to the Registered Student's appearance then the Registered Student must request a new card.

4. That Regulation 8.2.1 be amended as follows (additions underlined):
Any Registered Student, Student who is writing up or Graduand shall be subject to disciplinary measures if he is found to have breached the disciplinary offences as defined below:...
 - (j) *cheating or plagiarism (when judged serious by the Principal Academic Unit, as specified in the Code of Practice on Plagiarism) in assessed academic work or in examinations, including actions which constitute an Examination Irregularity under Regulation 7.2.3 (d) (iv) and the Code of Practice on Centrally Co-ordinated Formal Written Examinations;*
5. That Section 6 of the Code of Practice on Centrally Co-ordinated Formal Written Examinations be amended as detailed in Appendix A.

Arguments to Support Proposals

6. There has been a notable increase in the number of Examination Irregularities during the 2008/09 examination sittings. During the 2007/08 examination sittings (including the supplementaries) there were 25 Examination Irregularities reported, not including cases of students not producing identification when requested.

7. During the 2008/09 examination sittings, without the supplementaries having taken place, there have been 58 Examination Irregularities reported, not including cases of students not producing identification when requested, that is to say, with the full round of examination sittings not yet completed, there has been double the number of Examination Irregularities reported.
8. Under this number of Examination Irregularities it has become clear that the current form of the Regulations and the Code of Practice on Centrally Co-ordinated Formal Written Examinations is neither clear enough in terms of process nor necessarily explicit enough about what constitutes an Examination Irregularity.
9. In order to make the process clearer, it is proposed to add cross-references to the Regulations and Code of Practice on Centrally Co-ordinated Formal Written Examinations to make it clearer to those using the University's legislation where they should look for definitions and the next stage of procedures.
10. In order to make it clear what might constitute an Examination Irregularity, it is proposed to make it explicit that failure to comply with certain requirements of the Code of Practice on Centrally Co-ordinated Formal Written Examinations will be regarded as such, and also to add (clause 6.8) a new clause linking to the definition of Examination Irregularity in Regulations.
11. In light of concerns raised by the Examinations and Congregations Office about notes concealed within containers used to transport food, drink or writing equipment, it is proposed to add a new clause requiring all containers on desks to be transparent (clause 6.16) and to add a sentence to clause 6.17 requiring food and drink to be transported in transparent containers with no labels.
12. It is also suggested that the Code of Practice on Centrally Co-ordinated Formal Written Examinations specifically prohibit electronic and communication devices (clause 6.11) and the use of technical dictionaries for those students permitted to take a dictionary into examinations (6.15).
13. In consideration of a small but growing number of problems caused by cases where students have dramatically altered their physical appearance (e.g. by plastic surgery), it is proposed to add a new clause to the section of Regulations governing Identity Cards (Regulation 5.2.10 (d)) to require students to replace the card that bears their former likeness. This will enable invigilators to check students' accurately in examinations.

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From Code of Practice on Centrally Co-ordinated Formal Written Examinations

6. Arrangements for examination sittings

6.7 The complex nature of examination scheduling, together with the limited time available for examinations, may lead to Registered Students having two examinations scheduled on the same day. This cannot be avoided and no adjustment of the timetable will be undertaken.

6.8 All Registered Students shall follow all written and oral instructions during the examination. Failure to do so shall constitute an Examination Irregularity as in Regulation 7.2.3 (d) (iv), which may be treated as a misconduct or fitness to practise offence under Section 8 of the Regulations.

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6.9 Registered Students will be required to provide evidence of their identity during the sitting. This will usually be done by displaying their University Identity Card on the desk. Where there is uncertainty over the identity of a student during the sitting, the student will be permitted to finish the examination before any enquiries relating to their identity are made. Repeated failure to present valid evidence of the Registered Student's identity in different examination sittings will constitute an Examination Irregularity.

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6.10 Each examination session will begin promptly. Where an examination is also being held overseas in a different time-zone, the Examinations and Congregations Office will ask the host organisation to schedule the examination sitting at a time which will minimise the possibility of a breach of the security of the examination.

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6.11 Registered Students must listen carefully to the Senior Invigilator's announcements at the start, during and at the end of the examination and act upon these. Before the session begins Registered Students should ensure they have left all papers, notes, textbooks, bags and coats, communication devices and other unauthorised electronic or computer equipment in the area designated within the examination venue. Failure to comply with these instructions will constitute an Examination Irregularity.

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6.12 Registered Students must ensure that they take note of the rubric at the top of each examination question paper; failure to comply with these instructions is likely to constitute an Examination Irregularity.

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6.13 Registered Students must ensure that they do not engage in any form of cheating in connection with the examination. The University treats any form of cheating under examination conditions as an extremely serious matter (as it does the related offence of plagiarism). It will instigate Examination Irregularity procedures against an individual Registered Student where there is sufficient evidence of cheating based upon the Senior Invigilator's report.

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6.14 Registered Students must ensure that they write legibly in their examination answer books. If it is necessary because of illegibility to arrange for a transcription of the script to be produced in advance of marking, the Registered Student will be liable to the principal academic unit for the direct costs involved in this work (see Regulation 7.2.3 (d) (vi)).

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6.15 Registered Students whose first language is not English will be permitted to use a standard, un-annotated and unmarked dictionary during their examinations unless the question paper rubric specifically prohibits their use. This may be either solely English-based or cover English and the Registered Student's first language. Technical, annotated or electronic dictionaries will not be permitted. Any Registered Student wishing to make use of this concession must obtain a letter of authorisation from the Academic and Student Administration Enquiries Counter and bring this to every examination attended. Failure to produce the letter during an examination sitting may constitute an Examination Irregularity.

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6.16 All containers left on a desk during an examination sitting must be transparent. Failure to comply with this requirement will constitute an Examination Irregularity.

6.17 Registered Students will be allowed to consume sweets, mints and similar items, as well as non-alcoholic, bottled drinks during an examination session, provided no disturbance is caused to other Registered Students and provided that any container is transparent and any labels are removed. Other types of food are not permitted. Failure to comply with these requirements will constitute an Examination Irregularity.

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