

Academic Misconduct Procedure

Owner	Head of Centre		
Version	1.0		
Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions now cover AI misuse, poor academic practice, judgement, adjustments, and working days. • Misconduct types defined more clearly; AI distinct from ghosting; essay mills and file-sharing addressed. • Student guidance strengthened on referencing, proofreading, AI, Turnitin; CSO changed to SSO. • Procedures clarify Programme vs. School Hearings; ghosting/AI/personation marked as serious; expanded appeals with CoP letters. • Penalties split into minor/serious tables by awarding body; RP recording explained; stronger expulsion language. • New penalties for sharing work; updated flowchart and annexes. 		
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Related internal policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Appeals, Complaints & Disciplinary Procedures • Safeguarding, Prevent & Harassment Policy 		
Related external policies and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pearson Centre Handbook - Higher Nationals (Global) • UGC (University Grants Commission) - Redressal of Grievances of Students Regulations, 2023 - Core Practices (Concerns, Complaints, and Appeals) • RPwD Act 2016 (disability rights) • POSH Act 2013 • Constitution of India: Articles 14 - 17 • Consumer Protection Act 2019 • DPDP Act 2023 		

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Introduction

1. This Academic Misconduct Procedure describes RCL Mumbai approach to detecting and investigating suspected academic misconduct by students enrolled on taught higher education programmes.
2. It has been developed in accordance with the expectations Pearson and aligns with the regulations of the College's awarding bodies.
3. The procedure serves the following key purposes:
 - To ensure that all allegations of academic misconduct are handled fairly, transparently, and in a timely manner;
 - To protect the integrity of academic awards and ensure that students are assessed on their own work;
 - To comply with the requirements of relevant external regulatory bodies and awarding partners;
 - To provide students with opportunities to learn from mistakes, particularly where poor academic practice occurs early in their studies;
 - To promote good academic practice and support students in developing their understanding of academic integrity.
4. The procedure is intended for two primary audiences:
 - **College staff** responsible for assessing student work and investigating suspected academic misconduct; and
 - **Students** who are suspected of engaging in academic misconduct.
5. By applying this procedure consistently, RCL Mumbai aims to uphold academic standards while fostering a learning environment that encourages ethical scholarship and personal development.

Scope and Application

Student Type	Procedure Application
HND (Pearson)	This Procedure applies.
Regent College Award	Full procedure applies

6. If students are unsure about who awards their degree, they should contact their Student Success Officer (SSO).
7. This procedure does not apply to **formative assessments**, which are intended to support learning and do **not** count toward final marks.
8. Where misconduct is suspected in formative work, staff should address it through feedback and guidance. However, any **subsequent summative work** may be subject to **enhanced scrutiny** through moderation or verification. This process will not **compromise anonymised** marking. Deanonymisation may

only occur if authorised under the College's Academic Misconduct and Deanonymisation Procedures.

Definitions used in this procedure

9. **Poor academic practice** refers to errors in academic writing or referencing where there is no intention to deceive. These cases will normally be addressed through feedback and support rather than this procedure.
10. **Academic judgement** refers to decisions where only the opinion of an academic expert is sufficient, such as grading the quality of a piece of work. Academic judgement cannot be challenged under this procedure.
11. **Reasonable adjustments** are changes made to ensure that disabled students or those with long-term health conditions can engage with this procedure without disadvantage.
12. **Working day** means a weekday when the College is open for business, excluding weekends, public holidays, and College closure days.
13. Types of academic misconduct are detailed overleaf.

Types of academic misconduct

14. Academic misconduct may take many forms. The following are examples of behaviours which fall within this procedure.

Type	Definition	Examples
Plagiarism	Unacknowledged use of another person's work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using another person's words without quotation marks and acknowledgement• Paraphrasing another's work with only minor changes and without acknowledgement• Using another person's ideas without acknowledgement• Unacknowledged use of images, music, patents or other creative material• Copying another student's work, with or without their knowledge or consent.
Duplication	Resubmitting previous work without appropriate acknowledgement.	Submitting previous work again without citing it.
Collusion	Unauthorised collaboration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submitting work produced in collaboration with another person as entirely own work• Collaborating with another student on work submitted as that other student's unaided work• Enabling another student to copy all or part of own work and submit it as their own.

Type	Definition	Examples
Falsification	Dishonest creation or alteration of information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falsifying data in reports, projects or assessments to present results that were not obtained • Inventing references or making false claims in academic work.
Personation	Assuming another person's identity in an assessment or allowing impersonation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person takes an assessment on behalf of another • A student knowingly allows another to impersonate them
Ghosting / Contract Cheating	Submitting work produced by another person or offering own work for misconduct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitting work produced wholly or partly by another person, including paid or commissioned services • Offering own work to another student for misconduct • Engaging with commercial essay-writing services
External Allegations or Reports of Misconduct	Information from external parties alleging academic misconduct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegations from third-party companies or individuals about purchased or commissioned assignments
Misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Submitting unauthorised or undeclared AI-generated content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using AI for grammar and spell-checking is acceptable unless otherwise specified • Extensive AI-generated text may require draft versions or explanation • AI detection scores are indicative only • Translation tools may be acceptable unless they alter meaning or structure

Type	Definition	Examples
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using AI to generate ideas, analysis, or arguments is serious misconduct • Limited AI support (up to 10–15%) may be minor • Substantive generation (15–25%) normally serious • Extensive generation or full authorship is very serious
Examination misconduct	Any breach of exam rules or actions intended to gain unfair advantage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possessing unauthorised materials or devices • Copying from or communicating with another student during the exam • Failing to follow invigilator or proctor instructions • Removing, duplicating, or sharing restricted exam content • Personation during exams • Altering or tampering with exam scripts or records • Using unauthorised software or AI tools during exams • Possession of unauthorised materials is misconduct even if not used.

How can students avoid academic misconduct?

15. The best way to avoid academic misconduct is to always act with academic integrity. This means completing their assessments honestly, submitting their own work, and properly acknowledging the ideas and contributions of others.
16. Academic integrity involves:
 - **Proper referencing:** providing full citations for all sources used in assignments, such as books, articles, websites, newspapers, images, artefacts, data, software code, normally in a bibliography or reference list.
 - **Acknowledging ideas:** correctly referencing not only direct quotations but also paraphrased material and ideas from others, using the referencing style specified in the programme or module guidelines.
 - **Following assignment instructions:** adhering to all requirements outlined in programme handbooks, module guides, and assessment briefs.
 - **Using integrity tools:** making use of Regent College resources such as Turnitin and staff feedback to review work before submission.
 - **Clarifying use of AI:** using AI tools only when explicitly permitted and clearly acknowledging any use in accordance with module guidance.
17. Students should exercise caution when using proofreading or academic support services. Proofreading is defined as identifying grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors **without** changing the meaning, argument, or structure of the work. Any service that rewrites, re-words or re-structures content may constitute academic misconduct.
18. Students are strongly advised **not to share** their assignments (whether drafts or final versions) with other students or with third-party companies. Sharing work can enable others to commit misconduct and may itself constitute **collusion or contract cheating**.

How the academic misconduct procedure works

19. A diagrammatic summary of this procedure is provided at [Annex D](#).

Identification

20. College staff responsible for assessing student work or invigilating exams are expected to identify suspected academic misconduct. Internal verifiers and external examiners may also raise concerns.

21. To support staff, all student written work is subject to analysis using similarity-checking and AI-detection software. Therefore, all submissions must be provided in a machine-readable format (e.g., Word or PDF text files, not scanned images).

22. If misconduct is suspected:

- Staff must complete the Academic Misconduct Report Form.
- The form is submitted to the Programme Leader, who assesses the severity and decides next steps.
- If a formal hearing is required, a **panel** is convened. The typically includes academic staff not involved in marking and may include a Caseworker or School Administrator as secretary.
- Panels must consider any previous confirmed academic misconduct. Repeat offences, even if minor, will usually result in escalation to a higher penalty (see [Annex C](#)).

23. Cases are classified as either **minor** or **serious**, using the guidance in [Annex A](#).

24. When deciding penalties, the panel or decision-maker will consider mitigating factors, such as:

- Number and seriousness of any previous offences;
- Whether the student admitted the offence at the earliest opportunity;
- Expression of genuine remorse;
- Any compelling personal circumstances affecting the student's judgement.

Informal Warnings

25. If the Programme Leader finds that misconduct occurred without intent to deceive, an **informal warning** may be issued.
 - a. The warning is recorded on the student's record, and the student is directed to relevant training or support.
 - b. Only one informal warning may be issued during a student's period of study. Any further offence will attract a higher penalty (see [Annex C](#)).

Minor Offences – Programme Hearing

26. Minor offences are considered at a **Programme Hearing**, normally within one month of identification.
27. The hearing determines whether misconduct occurred and recommends a penalty to the Assessment Board.
28. At the hearing the student has the opportunity to:
 - Understand and clarify the suspected misconduct;
 - Accept responsibility for the misconduct; or
 - Contest the allegation.
29. If multiple students are involved, they are seen separately. Decisions are made after all hearings are completed.
30. The panel usually includes:
 - Programme Leader (Chair),
 - One academic staff member not involved in marking,
 - Caseworker or School Administrator (secretary and procedural adviser).
31. Student are notified in writing at least **five working days** before the hearing, including:
 - Details of the suspected misconduct (via the Report Form),
 - Panel membership,

- Right to be accompanied by a supporter (a family member or friend). Supporters offer guidance and moral support but do not speak on the student's behalf. External legal representatives are not normally permitted.
32. Students may object to a panel member on grounds (e.g. due to bias). Objections must be raised at least **two working days** before the hearing. The Caseworker decides if a replacement is appropriate.
 33. If the student admits misconduct, the panel adjourns to consider the outcome.
 34. If the student contests the allegation, the panel adjourns to determine whether misconduct occurred, applying the **balance of probabilities**¹ (i.e., more likely than not that misconduct occurred).
 35. Previous misconduct records are **not** considered when deciding if misconduct occurred but **may** influence the penalty.
 36. If the student does not attend without a valid reason, the panel may proceed in their absence.
 37. Possible outcomes include:
 - No further action, if misconduct is not found;
 - An informal warning; or
 - A recommendation to the Assessment Board for a penalty (see [Annex C](#)).

Serious Offences – School Hearing

38. Serious offences are considered at a School Hearing, normally within one month of identification.
 39. Procedures are the same as a Programme Hearing, but the panel must include at least one **senior academic** (normally a Head of Programme).
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40. Allegations of **personation** or **ghosting** (including contract cheating and unauthorised AI use) are always treated as serious. Panels must focus on verifying the authenticity of the student's work. See [Annex E](#) provides further guidance for staff and students on this process.

Notification of Outcome

41. Students are normally notified of the hearing outcomes within **five working days**.
42. If misconduct is confirmed, the outcome is reported to the Assessment Board. For students on programmes awarded by **Pearson BTEC** outcomes are also be reported according to those regulations.
43. If the misconduct affects fitness to practise (e.g., for professional qualifications), the Programme Leader will assess whether further action is needed. This may involve:
- A Fitness to Practise Panel under the College Procedure, or
 - Referral to the awarding body for action under its own procedures.

Record of Academic Misconduct Offences

44. All suspected, investigated, and confirmed cases of academic misconduct are recorded by the Academic Quality team for the purposes of monitoring, reporting, and quality assurance.
- Confirmed offences will remain on the student's record for the duration of their studies at the College.
 - Records include details of the student, unit, offence type, outcome, and penalty.
 - These records support consistency in decision-making, transparency at Assessment Boards, and institutional monitoring of academic integrity trends.
45. Records are retained securely in accordance with data protection legislation and the College's retention schedule. Anonymised data and summaries are

used for internal quality monitoring and governance oversight. Serious cases resulting in expulsion, withdrawal, or invalidation of results are reported to Pearson in accordance with their requirements.

Student's Right of Appeal

46. Students have the right to appeal the outcome of an Academic Misconduct Hearing.
 - Appeals must be submitted in writing within ten working days of receiving the decision letter.
 - All appeals are considered under **Part B of the College's Consolidated Student Appeals Procedure**, which sets out the valid grounds, process, and timescales for review.

47. Once the College or awarding body's process is complete, students will receive a **Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter**. The letter confirms the final outcome, states that all internal procedures have concluded, and provides information about the right to request an external review by the **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**. Students must submit any such requests within twelve months of the date on the CoP letter.

Annex A: Guidance on determining whether a suspected case of academic misconduct is minor or serious

When suspected academic misconduct is reported, the Senior Lecturer, Module Leader, or Programme Leader must consider the evidence and use the following guidance to classify the offence as **minor** or **serious**. This classification informs how the case will be handled under this Procedure.

Type of Misconduct	Minor Offence	Serious Offence
Plagiarism	Small section of text reproduced without acknowledgement; unlikely intent to deceive; early stage of study (HE3/HE4); no prior offence.	Significant amount of unacknowledged material; clear or likely intent to deceive; later stages (HE5+); or repeat offence.
Duplication	Reuse of small portions of previously submitted work without acknowledgement.	Substantial reuse of prior work submitted as new for credit; repeat offence.
Collusion	Limited, unintentional collaboration or similarities due to misunderstanding of group work expectations.	Deliberate collaboration or sharing of work; uploading or sharing on file-sharing sites (e.g., CourseHero, Chegg).
Falsification	Minor error in recording or presenting data without intent to deceive.	Fabrication, manipulation, or invention of data, results, or references.
Personation	— Not applicable —	Always serious: student impersonated another or was knowingly impersonated.
Ghosting / Contract Cheating	— Not applicable —	Always serious: work produced wholly or partly by another person, service, or AI tool.

Type of Misconduct	Minor Offence	Serious Offence
External Allegations / Third-party Reports	— Not applicable —	Always serious: credible external evidence that the student purchased, commissioned, or engaged third parties in producing assessed work.
Misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Limited unacknowledged use (e.g., grammar/spelling tools) with no intent to deceive, early stage of study.	Extensive use of AI-generated content presented as original work; AI use beyond permitted support functions.
Examination Misconduct	Brief communication unrelated to assessment; possession of irrelevant materials; failure to follow minor instructions without gaining advantage.	Using unauthorised materials or devices to gain advantage; communicating answers; accessing restricted content; tampering with records; personation.
File-Sharing / “Study Help” Platforms	Sharing drafts within authorised study groups for feedback, where no misconduct occurred.	Uploading or distributing College assignments or assessments to public or private platforms (e.g., CourseHero, WhatsApp, Discord, Telegram) that enable misconduct.

Annex B: Guidance for Panels

1. Members of Programme and School Hearing panels should have regard to the following guidance when determining what penalty to recommend where academic misconduct is admitted or found to have occurred.
2. Penalties are presented in ascending order of severity. The choice of penalty should reflect:
 - the extent of intent to deceive;
 - whether the student has previous offences; and
 - the level at which the student is studying.
3. In general:
 - Lesser penalties should be applied where the student did not intend to deceive, has no previous offences, and/or the offence occurred at Level 4 or below.
 - More severe penalties should be applied where there is clear intent to deceive, repeat offences, and/or the student is studying at Level 5 or above.
4. Informal warnings must not be issued where the offence is classed as serious, or where previous informal warnings or academic misconduct have already been recorded.

Annex C: Penalties for Academic Misconduct

C.1 General Principles

1. Penalties must be **proportionate, transparent, and educational**, ensuring that students learn from mistakes while maintaining the integrity of assessments.
2. The severity of misconduct is determined by intent, scale, recurrence, and mitigation.
3. Only **one informal warning (AM1)** may be issued during a student's period of study. Any subsequent offence must attract a higher penalty.
4. Repeat offences, even if minor in nature, will normally result in escalation to the next penalty level.
5. Panels must record clear reasoning when applying a lower penalty than normally expected.
6. Where intent to deceive is not established, panels may treat a serious case as a minor one if justified.
7. Confirmed outcomes are recorded and monitored by Academic Quality, and serious cases (AM5–AM6) are reported to Pearson.

C.2 Penalties for Minor Offences

(For unintentional or low-level breaches, especially at early stages of study)

Code	Penalty	Application / Conditions
AM1	<i>Informal Warning and Guidance</i>	Issued only once in a student's academic career. Recorded on the student record. Mandatory academic integrity training required.
AM2	<i>Fail Assessment Component with Resubmission Permitted</i>	Used when intent to deceive is not evident. Referral assignment brief may differ.
AM3	<i>Fail Assessment Component with Further Attempt Permitted</i>	For repeated or more substantial minor misconduct, or confirmed limited AI/translation misuse. Student must attend academic integrity training.

C.3 Penalties for Serious Offences

(For deliberate, repeated, or large-scale misconduct; includes extensive AI misuse, contract cheating, or personation)

Code	Penalty	Application / Conditions
AM4	<i>Fail Assessment Component with Further Attempt Permitted</i>	First serious offence where student admits responsibility or mitigating factors exist (e.g., misunderstanding AI use, language barriers).
AM5	<i>Fail Unit – No Further Attempt</i>	For deliberate plagiarism, falsification, or extensive AI generation; or repeat misconduct following a serious offence.
AM6	<i>Termination of Registration / Expulsion</i>	Reserved for personation, contract cheating, or repeat serious misconduct. Reported to Pearson and noted in student record.

C.4 Escalation and Special Cases

Repeat Offences:

Where a student has a prior confirmed academic misconduct offence, any subsequent misconduct — even if minor — will normally attract the next higher penalty. A student with a prior serious offence (AM4–AM5) will not normally be eligible for a “minor” penalty.

Downgrading:

A panel may exceptionally treat a serious offence as a minor one if credible mitigating factors exist (e.g., translation or accessibility issues) and there is no evidence of intent to deceive.

AI Misuse and Translation Tools:

Panels must consider the purpose and extent of AI use rather than rely solely on detection scores.

Indicative guidance:

- Up to **10–15% AI influence** (grammar, structure): minor (AM2–AM3).
- **15–25% substantive content**: serious (AM4).
- **Over 25% or full generation**: very serious (AM5–AM6).
Translation tools may raise AI percentages; panels must evaluate context before confirming misconduct.

Penalties for Uploading Work to File-Sharing Websites

If a student is suspected of having uploaded their own work to a file-sharing website (such as CourseHero.com, Chegg, or similar platforms), the case will normally be referred to the **Student Disciplinary Procedure**. Uploading work without authorisation may enable others to commit academic misconduct and will be treated as a serious breach of academic integrity. Such cases may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or withdrawal from the College.

The College also monitors emerging practices such as the sharing of AI-generated content, unauthorised use of online collaboration spaces, and participation in so-called “study help” groups (for example, WhatsApp, Telegram, or Discord channels) that facilitate the exchange of assignments, answers, or assessment materials. These behaviours will be investigated and addressed under this Procedure or the Student Disciplinary Procedure, as appropriate.

Reporting to Pearson:

All AM5–AM6 outcomes must be reported to Pearson.

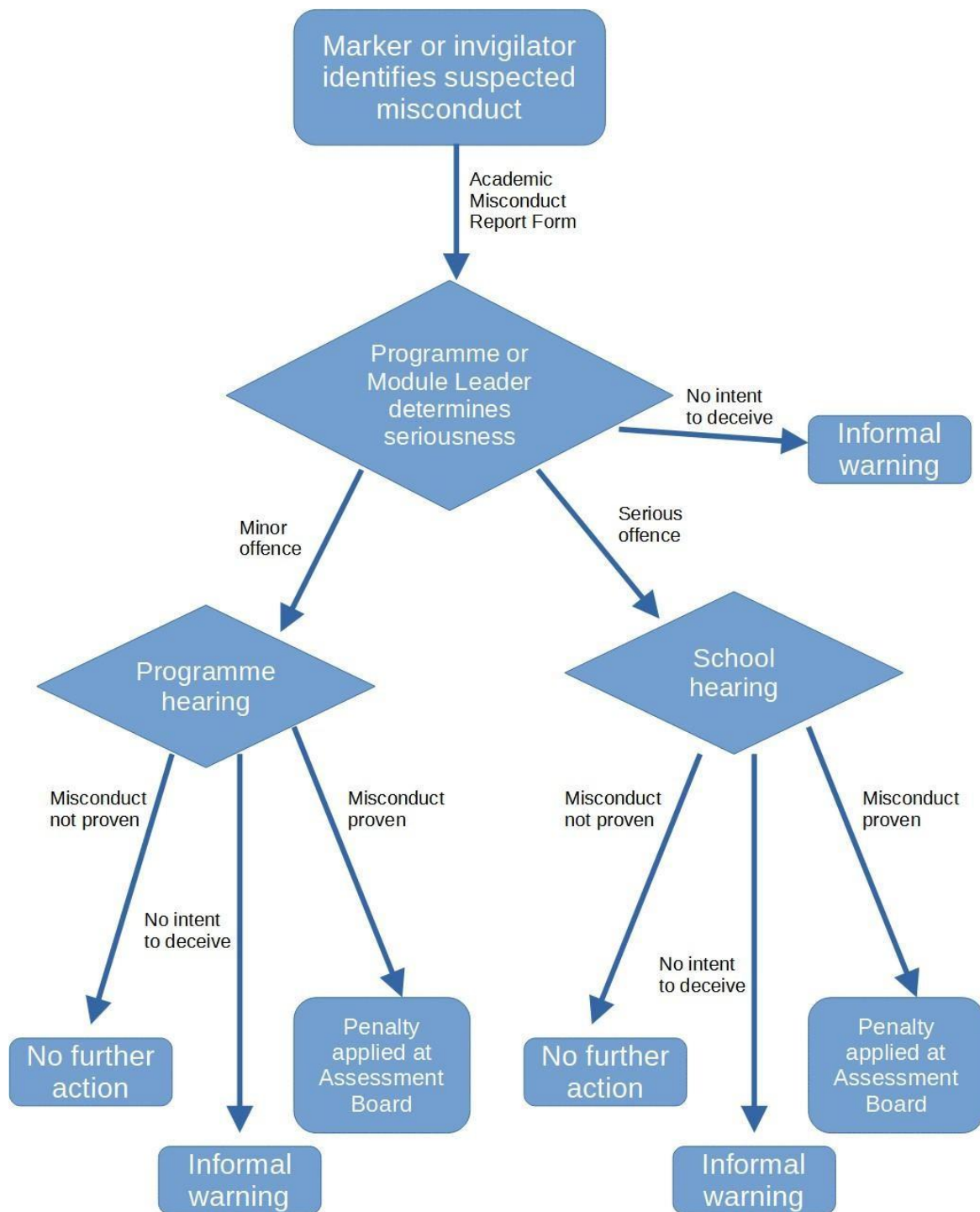
Record-Keeping:

All outcomes (AM1–AM6) must be logged on the Academic Misconduct Register for consistency and monitoring.

C5: Awarding Body Application of Penalties

Awarding Body	Application of penalties
Pearson (HND)	Full range of penalties above applies. RP must be recorded in Pearson systems. Expulsion cases must be reported to Pearson.
RCL Mumbai	Full range of penalties above applies under College regulations.

Annex D: Summary of the Academic Misconduct Procedure



Annex E: Guidance to School Hearings on establishing the authenticity of a student's work

1. Where alleged academic misconduct involves personation or ghosting (which should always be regarded as a serious offence), the panel for the School Hearing will be required to establish the authenticity of the student's work in the absence of other evidence.
2. The panel should begin by informing the student that it is suspected that they may not have authored all or part of the work and that the Hearing presents an opportunity for the student to demonstrate that the work is entirely their own and to confirm that the student:
 - undertook the reading, research, and preparatory work themselves;
 - understands what they have written;
 - wrote the piece of work themselves.
3. The panel should then ask questions to test the student's knowledge and understanding of the topic and the work submitted. These questions may focus on the work submitted – for example, by exploring the concepts or theories mentioned in the work – and/or on the background to it, such as the sources, data or evidence cited in the work (to check that the student recognises it) or how the work fits within the wider subject field.
4. The questioning may be intensive but must remain measured and objective, and the student must be given time to respond fully.
5. A formal record must be made of the discussion (see *Minor Offences (Programme Hearing): panel composition/secretary role*)
6. At the end of the Hearing the panel should thank the student for attending and adjourn (without the student present) to determine the outcome in accordance with **Annex C (Penalties for Academic Misconduct)**.
7. The student should be informed in writing of the outcome within five working days of the Hearing.