

Quick guide to Assessment Offences

What is an assessment offence?

An assessment offence is any action that would give a student an unfair advantage over other students in any element of assessment - including coursework, exams, group work and presentations. Types of assessment offences include:

- examination offences (e.g. bringing in unauthorised notes, mobile phones, smart watches, assuming a false identity in the examination room or for online examinations etc.);
- plagiarism (e.g. quoting from texts without attributing the quotes, paraphrasing someone else's work to pass it off as yours, or otherwise presenting other people's words or work as your own);
- collusion (e.g. purchasing an essay from an essay mill, posting assessment questions on homework assistance websites, sharing your work with other students or posting questions on social media/messaging platforms like Facebook or WhatsApp **whether or not you use the answers in your final assessment**).

You should remember that the rules apply just as strictly to **online assessment and remote assessment**, so always read any instructions carefully and make sure that you are not using inappropriate resources to assist you or working together with other students inappropriately.

You should familiarise yourself with the types of offence detailed in the [Assessment Offences Policy](#) and read the [College's Statement on Plagiarism Prevention](#). If you are unsure about what counts as an offence, ask your tutor or supervisor. Please remember that ignorance of the policy is not considered a defence if you are accused of an assessment offence. That means that you cannot simply claim that you didn't know that what you were doing was against College rules or you didn't know there was a policy. Do take the time to get to know what is and is not permitted.

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

You will receive formal communication from either your Department or from a Registry case handler, explaining what offence you are suspected of committing and what will happen next. This will usually be an email and you need to check your Birkbeck email account regularly.

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 either to say in writing that you committed the offence, or to attend a panel hearing to discuss the allegation. Where a panel hearing cannot take place in person it will be conducted virtually over Microsoft Teams.

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. Where the panel hearing cannot take place in person it will be conducted virtually over Microsoft Teams. The College reserves the right to conduct the panel hearing in your absence if you do not respond to the invitation to attend or are unable to attend on the proposed dates.

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 be informed in writing within 14 calendar days of the outcome of the panel hearing and, if applicable, the applied penalty.

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 a Student 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 they are invited to do so by the panel members. 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 consequences?

Being found to have committed an assessment offence is *serious* and the consequences can range from a formal warning to termination of your registration as a Birkbeck student.

Can I contest the panel's decision?

If, after you receive the outcome of the panel hearing, you believe the penalty to be unfair or not in line with College procedure, you can request a review of the decision. The College will only consider your request for review if it falls under one of these three permitted grounds:

- That the penalty imposed was excessive or inappropriate;
- That the process applied or the decision reached by the panel is not in accordance with the Assessment Offences policy;
- That the conclusions of the panel cannot, given the evidence, be reasonably sustained.

Any request for review must be made within 14 days of receiving the panel outcome.

Requests should be sent to studentappeals@bbk.ac.uk; the Academic Registrar or nominee will then consider whether the case should be re-heard by a different panel.

If you go through all of 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.

Further advice

Birkbeck Students' Union has a dedicated advice service for students and can provide guidance and help with submitting casework (including assessment offence panels, disciplinary hearings, academic appeals and student complaints). You can reach a Student Adviser by email at su-advice@bbk.ac.uk or by telephone on 020 7631 6655.