

Standing Academic Committee

(a standing committee of the Senate)

Terms of reference

1. To consider and act upon recommendations for a permanent or temporary exclusion made in cases of unsatisfactory academic performance or breach of academic regulations by undergraduates, by students registered for master's degrees by coursework or for a higher diploma or certificate, and by students registered for research degrees of the university.
2. To decide whether to approve any such recommendation (acting under powers delegated by the Senate and subject to the right of appeal under Statute 21) or to take other appropriate action (e.g. to give a warning that further unfavourable reports could or would lead to automatic expulsion).
3. To consider and act upon recommendations arising from the alleged use of unfair means in examinations or coursework, which if substantiated shall normally constitute a reason for exclusion from the University (subject to the right of appeal under Statute 21).

Committee Composition

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) (in the Chair)
one member of each of the four faculties, who is also a senior member of the Senate (at least two reserves must be appointed for each)

Procedure

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor is normally Chair; the Deputy Chair (if needed) is appointed by the Committee from among those serving on an individual occasion.

The Chair is appointed for three years, renewable once, other appointments are for two years and members are eligible for reappointment.

All appointments run from 1 August to 31 July.

Members do not serve when the Committee is considering any case in which their department is concerned.

Unsatisfactory academic performance

Before the Committee can hear a case (other than a case referred by the Senate) it must be satisfied that an adequate warning has been given to the student that he/she is likely to be called before the Committee unless there is a substantial improvement in his/her academic performance. Such a warning must specify in detail the manner in which the improvement has to be made and by what date(s). Copies of warning letters must be sent to the student's college tutor, the senior tutor of his/her college and the Secretary of the Committee.

The letter from a Head of Department or his/her authorised deputy recommending exclusion (which should be sent to the Secretary of the Committee) must show that other action has proved unsatisfactory and should include at least the following information:

- (a) the student's attendance record;
- (b) the student's coursework record;
- (c) the standard of work hitherto attained;
- (d) the standard of which the student is thought to be capable;
- (e) an account of efforts that have been made to persuade the student to meet academic requirements, indicating whether the student's college tutor or the senior tutor of his/her college has been consulted;
- (f) whether there are any medical personal circumstances (claimed or confirmed) known to the department (a recommendation for exclusion would have to be despite any such circumstances, and the Committee would need to be satisfied that efforts had been made to obtain any appropriate professional medical and/or counselling advice).

In the case of an undergraduate information should also be obtained from any other departments whose courses he/she is registered to take.

A week's notice must be given to a student who is to appear before the Committee, unless he/she agrees to appear earlier.

A student called before the committee may be accompanied by his/her college tutor or another officer of the University. He/she may always submit a written statement in advance and the Committee may, if it thinks it advisable, invite him/her to bring an officer of the Students' Union with him/her to the meeting of the Committee.

A record of action taken by the Committee must be maintained.

Where the Committee has permitted a student to remain in the University upon specific conditions and when the chairperson and Secretary of the Committee, after consulting the relevant parties, have clear evidence that those conditions have not been met or that he/she has not absented himself/herself from the University during a period of temporary exclusion, permanent exclusion automatically ensues without further reference to the Committee, the person excluded having his/her statutory right of appeal; the Chair and Secretary may at their discretion see the student before any decision is made.

Undergraduates should not be brought before the Committee for exclusion from the University later than the end of the Michaelmas term of their final year save in very exceptional circumstances.

A copy of notes for guidance, including a 'model' of a letter of warning of an undergraduate, is available from the Secretary of the Committee and has been circulated to heads of departments.

Malpractice in undergraduate and postgraduate examinations and coursework

The full regulations, including the penalties to be exacted, are set out in Appendix Two of the Examination Regulations, and the definitions of malpractice are to be found there and in Ordinance 7. Set out below is a summary of the procedures to be followed.

The Standing Academic Committee investigates all cases of alleged examination malpractice referred to it by the University Dean or relevant Academic Officer(s) and determines whether an academic offence has been committed.

The Standing Academic Committee may hear evidence in any way it sees fit and apply a course of action, specified in advance and including exclusion from the university (see also below). Exceptionally the committee may refer the case to the appropriate board of examiners, with a statement of findings and suggestions for appropriate action. The board of examiners in such cases have absolute discretion what evidence to take into account, or be called for. They may also take into account, but not be bound by the suggestions of the Standing Academic Committee, but their decisions shall be subject to ratification by the Senate.

In cases of academic malpractice (plagiarism), the Standing Academic Committee:

- (a) hears cases relating to first or second offences where the student does not accept the decision of the Academic Officer;
- (b) hears cases relating to third and fourth offences.

Appeals against penalties for malpractice

Where the Senate approves the recommendation of a board of examiners that a degree or other qualification shall not be awarded, and the recommendation does not include the opportunity for reassessment, the student may appeal as appropriate to either the Part II Review Committee for permission to be reassessed for a Pass degree, or to the Postgraduate Review Panel.

Where a student has been excluded from the University for malpractice in coursework (plagiarism), either permanently or for a stated time, who has been judged by the Standing Academic Committee to have committed a third or fourth offence, such a student has the right of appeal under Statute 21, in accordance with the procedures set out in Ordinance 7.