

Policy for handling deceptive conduct in examinations For first- and second-cycle education

Background

The number of students reported for various types of deceptive conduct in examinations has increased in recent years and there have also been changes in the nature of this cheating.¹ The large increase in the amount of information available on the Internet in particular has led to issues concerning the plagiarism of existing texts. To curb the problem of cheating, preventative initiatives at all levels within the University are of great importance. It is particularly important to inform all students, in both Swedish and English, of what constitutes cheating and of the consequences it can have for the student. This document has been prepared for use by both students and teachers to communicate what constitutes cheating and deceptive conduct in examinations, how suspected cheating is dealt with, and what consequences cheating entails.

Definition of cheating and deceptive conduct in examinations

Cheating or deceptive conduct in examinations means that the student intentionally attempts to deceive the examiner during the assessment of academic performance. The student must have done this consciously and have been aware that the practice was not permitted. It is enough that an attempt is made – it does not need to have been successful. Cheating does not need to affect grading to constitute cheating. Even if the cheating adversely affects the student, for example through an incorrect cheat sheet, it is still considered cheating. Cheating also includes helping another student without permission, for example, by disclosing answers in individual tests. However, preparations that are not implemented, for example writing a cheat sheet that is not used, do not constitute cheating.

Digital audits of students' work

Uppsala University uses services in which texts can be reviewed based on a number of databases. One such service is called Urkund.² Using these databases, a teacher can investigate whether a submitted text, e.g. a thesis, contains similarities with published texts or other student work. Common procedures include the student submitting their work as a submission with a plagiarism check via the Student Portal or a teacher sending the work in for a text comparison. After the plagiarism check, the teacher can view the submitted work along with information on similarities with other texts, and with markings to indicate any suspected passages in the submitted work. The teacher then makes a final assessment of whether the passages marked by the service can be considered plagiarism.

¹See, for example, the annual reports presented by the Swedish Higher Education Authority on disciplinary matters at Sweden's university colleges. These reports are available on the public authority's website (www.uka.se).

²For more information, please see www.urkund.se

How is suspicion of cheating handled?

Chapter 10, Section 9 (Appendix 1) of the Higher Education Ordinance describes the rules of procedure for cheating. The Ordinance states that instances of suspected deception must be promptly reported. This means that there is an obligation to report such matters. Because it is not clarified who bears this obligation, it is deemed to include everyone. The matter must also be given high priority and must not wait, for example for a manager to return from a trip. The department is responsible for dealing with the matter.

The department shall deal with suspicions of cheating or deceptive conduct in examinations in accordance with the above. Anyone who suspects cheating must immediately inform the director of studies.³ The examiner and the director of studies will, after consultation with the teacher responsible for the course, decide together on further action in the matter.

In order to determine whether the conduct was intentional, a discussion with the student is necessary before a decision can be taken on reporting the incident. This discussion may also need to be supplemented with other investigations in order to determine whether the suspected cheating is well-founded or not. Consideration shall be given to the individual's legal rights and right to privacy. The first discussion with the student should always be open, i.e. the student must be informed that a suspicion of cheating has come forward, that this is the reason for the discussion and that the student's own explanations for the incident are requested. All contact with the various parties in the matter should be documented as official notes and recorded in an official register. All verbal and written language used in the communication with the student must be factual and impartial. The student's identity shall not be unnecessarily disclosed to employees not directly involved in the matter.

The director of studies and the examiner are only tasked with investigating if well-founded suspicions in instances of attempts to deceive during an examination exist. They should *not* try to determine the strength of the evidence or the presence of mitigating factors. The student shall be continuously informed of all proceedings in the matter.

If the investigation finds that there is a well-founded suspicion of cheating, the examiner and the director of studies shall immediately submit a report to the Vice-Chancellor. All written material in the matter shall be enclosed with the report, including copies of the information that the student received about the course and its examination requirements. The report shall be signed by the director of studies. If the investigation results in the matter being dismissed, an official note is written to document the handling of the matter.

The Vice-Chancellor may, after investigating, make a decision or refer the matter to the Disciplinary Board for consideration. The student in question and the responsible director of studies will be called to the Disciplinary Board meeting. If needed, other relevant parties will also be called to the meeting, such as the examiner, teacher or invigilator.

What disciplinary measures are taken in the event of cheating?

General provisions for disciplinary measures are laid down in Chapter 10 of the Higher Education Ordinance, see Appendix 1. Disciplinary measures can be taken against students admitted to first-cycle, second-cycle or third-cycle education. Measures cannot be taken for

³ or in some cases the programme or education co-ordinator on the department.

admission tests or in contract education.

The consequences of cheating may involve a warning or suspension for up to six months. A decision on suspension means that the student is prohibited from participating in instruction, tests or other activities within the framework of education at Uppsala University. During suspension, the student may not study in the University's libraries or otherwise enter any of the University's premises.

The student may, however, have contact with study advisers. The suspension is also registered in Ladok and information on the suspension is provided to all parties required for the suspension to be implemented. No results can be registered in Ladok during the suspension period. CSN is informed of the Disciplinary Board's suspension decision because a suspended student is not entitled to student finance. Other disciplinary measures than those decided by the Disciplinary Board are not permitted.

Correction of tests in which cheating is suspected

Normally, the teacher awaits the Disciplinary Board's position and if cheating is determined, the test (tests consist of both oral and written information) is considered invalid. If the student is cleared of the suspicion, an examination is conducted. Exemptions may be made; in cases of uncertainty, the teacher should contact the Disciplinary Board's legal counsel. If cheating is discovered after the test is corrected and the results reported, the teacher may reconsider the grade. The conventional authority in such appeals for reconsiderations is the same teacher who decided the original grade. For changes to a lower grade to be possible, it is required that the student herself/himself has deceived the teacher, and that the teacher would have invalidated the test or given a lower grade if the factual circumstances had been known.

Examples of cheating situations

Here are a few examples of what can be considered cheating:

- use of prohibited aids in written tests (notes, mobile phones and similar)
- modification of corrected and returned written work
- unauthorised cooperation with another student/person in individual oral examinations or individual written assignments/take-home examinations
- incorrect recording of attendance in mandatory instruction
- false information about previous academic work
- plagiarism, copying or revision of texts, for example the student's own or other students' work, or copying without proper citation and source.

Examples of ways suspected cheating is handled

Two students submit similar solutions on written assignments for an individual take-home examination. It must be assessed if there has been unauthorised cooperation. A broad similarity of the solutions is not grounds for well-founded suspicion. The department must instead be able to demonstrate in report documentation that there were sections in the students' solutions in which both of the students' answers were essentially the same.

An invigilator submits information that a student used a cheat sheet during a written test. Information about the incident and proof in the form of the cheat sheet and written answers on the test are considered to constitute well-founded suspicion of cheating.

A corrected test has been handed back to the student, and the student returns with comments about incorrect corrections and shows a question that was not scored. It must be assessed if the test was modified after being handed back. In this case, it is essential that the test with the failed results has been copied and filed in the department. Suspicion of cheating can then be substantiated with a comparison between the original and the copy.

Extract from Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993:100)

Chapter 10 Disciplinary Measures .

General provisions

Section 1 Disciplinary measures may be invoked against students who:

1. use prohibited aids or other methods to attempt to deceive during examinations or other forms of assessment of study performance
2. disrupt or obstruct teaching, tests or other activities within the framework of courses and study programmes at the higher education institution
3. disrupt activities in the library of the higher education institution or other separate establishments at the institution, or
4. subject another student or member of the staff of the higher education institution to harassment or sexual harassment of the kind laid down in Section 4 of Chapter 1 of the Discrimination Act (2008:567).

Disciplinary measures may not be invoked more than two years after the offence has been committed. Ordinance (2008:944).

Disciplinary Measures .

Section 2 The disciplinary measures comprise warnings and suspension.

A decision on suspension means that the student is prohibited from participating in instruction, tests or other activities within the framework of the course or study programmes at the higher education institution. The decision shall comprise one or more periods, but shall not exceed six months in total.

A suspension decision may also be limited to apply to access to certain premises at the higher education institution.

Section 9 If there are grounds for suspecting that an offence of the kind laid down in Section 1 has been committed, the vice-chancellor shall be notified promptly.

The vice-chancellor shall arrange for the matter to be investigated and provide the student with an opportunity to make representations concerning the complaint. The vice-chancellor shall then, after consultation with the legally qualified member when appropriate, decide whether the circumstances are such that the matter shall

1. be dismissed without further action,
2. call for a warning from the vice-chancellor, or
3. be referred for a hearing by the disciplinary board.

Section 10 A decision by the vice-chancellor to issue a warning may be submitted to the disciplinary board by the student for review. The student shall be informed of this right.