Faculty of Engineering
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Guidelines To Academic Honesty

Foreword

Academic honesty is one of the core values of higher learning. This booklet contains guidelines for undergraduate students in their pursuit of academic honesty in academic works. Guidelines and examples in this booklet are more related to engineering studies. **Students in the Faculty should refer to the more comprehensive University guidelines at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.**

Advancement of the knowledge frontier is seldom a result of solo work but relies on collaborative effort at large. Many breakthroughs were built upon the work of great scholars of the past. Hence, when preparing one's findings or results, credits must be given where credits are due. Plagiarism is essentially using (e.g., copying/quoting/paraphrasing) other's original work as one's own, without giving credit to or acknowledging the source. In the context of engineering studies, the work involved is typically computer programming and mathematical/scientific problem-solving assignments. In general, it is difficult to formulate precise guidelines on when computer program codes or mathematical derivation/proof fragments are plagiarized from another source, since allegations of this sort depend on the amount of similar codes or structures, and plausibility of two persons coming up with the same tricky idea. However, while it is possible for two different people to come up with similar solutions, there is usually more than one way of coding an algorithm or phrasing a mathematical derivation. Hence, appearance of (a) substantial identical or similar structures, (b) identical or similar non-trivial structures, or even (c) identical or similar mistakes in two submissions is a good indication of possible plagiarism. For a more comprehensive discussion of plagiarism and the proper use of source material, students should refer to the University guidelines on "Honesty in Academic Work".

In case there is any doubt on these guidelines or whether a certain act is considered plagiarism, students should seek clarification from teachers of the respective courses and should never make their own assumptions or interpretations.

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Note. This booklet lays out the Faculty's expectation on academic honesty and gives concrete examples of plagiarism in the context of engineering studies, so that students can have a better understanding on how to make proper use of source material and discussion results in engineering assignments, laboratory reports, and projects. Also, it outlines the penalty scheme extracted from the University scheme and the procedure of the Faculty Disciplinary Committee in handling student disciplinary cases, so that students are fully aware of the possible consequences.

Academic dishonesty is not restricted to plagiarism or undeclared multiple submission, students in the Faculty shall therefore refer to the University guidelines on academic honesty for full information.

Section 1: General Principles

Do's

- **Uphold the standard in academic work and academic honesty**
- **Students should do their own work** and **submit their own work on time**
- **Observe Academic Honesty Guideline set by the University**
- **Safeguard your own computers and let no others (e.g., classmates or roommates) access your own works**
- **Include proper citation whenever source material from books, other people or the Internet are used**
- **Give proper acknowledgement to any help that you received**

The help could be in the form of discussion with other student(s) or source materials related to the assignment. For the former, you should indicate from whom you receive the help and what help you received. For the latter, you should give a proper citation of the materials. It should be noted that the "help" mentioned in the above rule should be of general nature and should comply with the rules presented on the next page. Students who fail to give proper acknowledgement to the help they received to finish their work will be liable for plagiarism.

Students are expected to submit their own work in their courses. In the Faculty of Engineering, most plagiarism cases involve a student:

(a) Copy in whole or in part of a work of fellow classmate(s) or friend(s), who may or may not have to submit the same assignment, or

(b) Use source material from books or Internet without proper citation.

Don'ts

- **Do not look at solutions that are not your own**

  These include, but are not limited to, solutions from the Internet or solutions from another student (past or present). Basically, you should not look at someone else's solutions when solving the assignment problems. It is not an appropriate way to "make sure I get things right", "get hints", or "learn alternative approaches". Students who submit works that are copied or derived from others' works as their own will be liable for plagiarism.

- **Do not share your solution with others without the consent of the course teacher**

  You should under no circumstance give your solution to others, no matter who asks you for help. For instance, you should not give your solution to another student and ask him/her to turn it in for you; you should not disseminate your solution via email, chat groups, social media, websites, etc. You are solely responsible to safeguard your own computer and take reasonable measures to secure your own solution. For instance, you should never leave your work on public computers where other people can see. Following the spirit of this rule, you should not discuss / share / teach your solution approaches to such an extent that you and your fellow students turn in highly similar solutions. Students who are found violating this rule will be liable for plagiarism.

- **Do not use or employ any third-party service, or provide services as a third party**

- **Do not use generative AI tools to complete works *as if* it is done by you**

- **Do not take risk to violate any of the above rules**

The bottom line is that while students are encouraged to discuss ideas together and seek general advice when needed, they must work out their own work and give credits where credits are due. Having the acknowledgement of other student(s) does not absolve the students, if any of the rules stated above is/are violated.

Section 2: Copying Materials from Other Students (past / present)

The most obvious and substantial type of plagiarism is copying whole articles, sections, paragraphs or whole sentences from some source materials without acknowledgement. Even the use of a few words or paraphrasing (without actually copying any words at all) may constitute plagiarism if the source is not acknowledged. Also, copying/sharing of works from past/present student will be liable for plagiarism.

Computer Programming Assignments

The following are examples of improper use of other people's work in the context of computer programming assignments.

Original source: Student A came up with the following routine in the C computer language for his/her assignment (which contains other parts):

```
/*-------------------------------------------------------------*/
int findLargest(int size, int a[]) {
    int i, tmp = 0;
for (i = 1; i < size; ++i)
        if (a[i] > a[tmp])
                tmp = i;
    return(tmp);
}
/*-------------------------------------------------------------*/
```

Example 1: Improper (plagiarism by straight copying):

Student B copied Student A'sroutine verbatim (having the acknowledgement does not absolve the students from the "Don't Rules" under the "General Principles" section):

```
/*-------------------------------------------------------  */
/*  ********************************** */
/*  ** copied from my classmate Student A ** */
/*  ********************************** */
int findLargest(int size, int a[]) {
   int i, tmp = 0;
   for (i = 1; i < size; ++i)
      if (a[i] > a[tmp])
            tmp = i;
    return(tmp);
}
/*-------------------------------------------------------------*/
```

Example 2: Improper (plagiarism by changing variable names):

Student C copied Student A's routine and performed only a systematic change of variable names:

```
/*-------------------------------------------------------------*/
int findL(int s, int b[]) {
   int j, tmp1 = 0;
   for (j = 1; j < s; ++j)
      if (b[i] > b[tmp1])
            tmp1 = j;
   return(tmp1);
}
/*-------------------------------------------------------------*/
```

Example 3: Improper (plagiarism by superficial changes):

Student D basically copied Student A's routine and performed some superficial reordering of statements and expressions:

```
/*-------------------------------------------------------------*/
int findLargest(int size, int a[]) {
   int tmp;
   int i;
   tmp = 0;
   for (i = 1; i < size; ++i)
      if (a[tmp] < a[i])
            tmp = i;
   return(tmp);
}
/*-------------------------------------------------------------*/
```

Example 4: Improper (plagiarism by making slight structural changes):

Student E basically copied Student A's routine and performed a simple transformation of the for-loop into a while-loop:

```
/*-------------------------------------------------------------*/
int findLargest(int size, int a[]) {
    int tmp;
    int i;
    tmp = 0;                          -¦-
    i = 0;
    ++i;
    while (i < size) {
        if (a[i] > a[tmp])
                tmp = i;
        ++i;
    }
    return(tmp);
}
/*-------------------------------------------------------------*/
```

Using Results from Discussions

The following examples serve to help you prevent technical faults and build up a right attitude towards group discussions.

Example 1: In a computing assignment you are asked to write a program to sort a given set of 5-digit numbers. You may discuss with your classmates on sorting methods, general programming techniques, or functions specific to the language being used. You must however write your own program without assistance from others.

Example 2: You are doing a laboratory experiment with another two group members. After taking the necessary data, all three of you examine the data together to see if they comply with the theory. While the raw data can be shared and presented identically in your reports, each of you must write in your own words your interpretation of the data, their agreement or disagreement with the theory, and your conclusion.

Example 3: In a math assignment you are asked to find the inverse of a 3-by-3 matrix. In this calculation you need to find the determinant of this matrix but you have the knowledge only for a 2-by-2 matrix. You may ask someone to teach you how to cope with a general 3-by-3 case but you must perform the actual calculation by your own effort.

Lab Reports

The following are improper ways to prepare a lab report.

Example 1: Improper (looking at other's solution): A group of students, Ming and Man, had just finished their lab work. They left the lab and worked on the report in the computer room. Then, they discovered that their data was not quite right. So, they consulted their classmates Ho and Hei and checked their data against their own.

Example 2: Improper (plagiarism): Indeed, Ming and Man had overlooked a crucial step in the measurement and got the wrong results. Since the lab had already been closed, and Ming and Man did not want to take the trouble to repeat their lab measurement, so Ming suggested that they just replaced their wrong data with Ho and Hei's data.

Example 3: Improper (sharing solution with others): Man thought that it would not be courteous to use other's data without asking, so Man sought Ho and Hei's consent to just pull a small portion of the lab data from their report and graft into theirs. As good citizens with kind hearts to help others, Ho and Hei consented.

Example 4: Improper (plagiarism): Ho and Hei did the lab experiment as a group. The teacher of the lab course has stated that students doing the lab experiments in a group must still submit their own lab reports. However, Ho and Hei submitted two identical lab reports.

Referring to Example 2 under "Using Results from Discussions", this means that although the raw data can be presented identically in Ho and Hei's lab reports, everything else (such as answers to lab questions, interpretation of data, conclusions, etc.) must be written in their own words.

Section 3: Copying Materials from the Internet

There is abundant information available in different formats on the Internet. With powerful search engines like Google, one can retrieve useful online articles or writings by simply inputting a few keywords of interest. This is an effective way of retrieving timely information and should be encouraged.

However, one must be careful when he/she would like to incorporate such online information into his/her own work. It is considered plagiarism if a student includes the original text, in whole or in part, of an article that he/she finds on the Internet into his/her assignment/report without properly acknowledging the source of the information.

Example 1: Suppose that you would like to write a paper on the history of Internet. The following is part of an online article (http://www.isoc.org/ internet/history/brief.shtml):

"The original ARPANET grew into the Internet. Internet was based on the idea that there would be multiple independent networks of rather arbitrary design, beginning with the ARPANET as the pioneering packet switching network, but soon to include packet satellite networks, ground-based packet radio networks and other networks. The Internet as we now know it embodies a key underlying technical idea, namely that of open architecture networking."

The following paragraph copies/paraphrases the original text of that article without mentioning the source of information. This is obviously plagiarism:

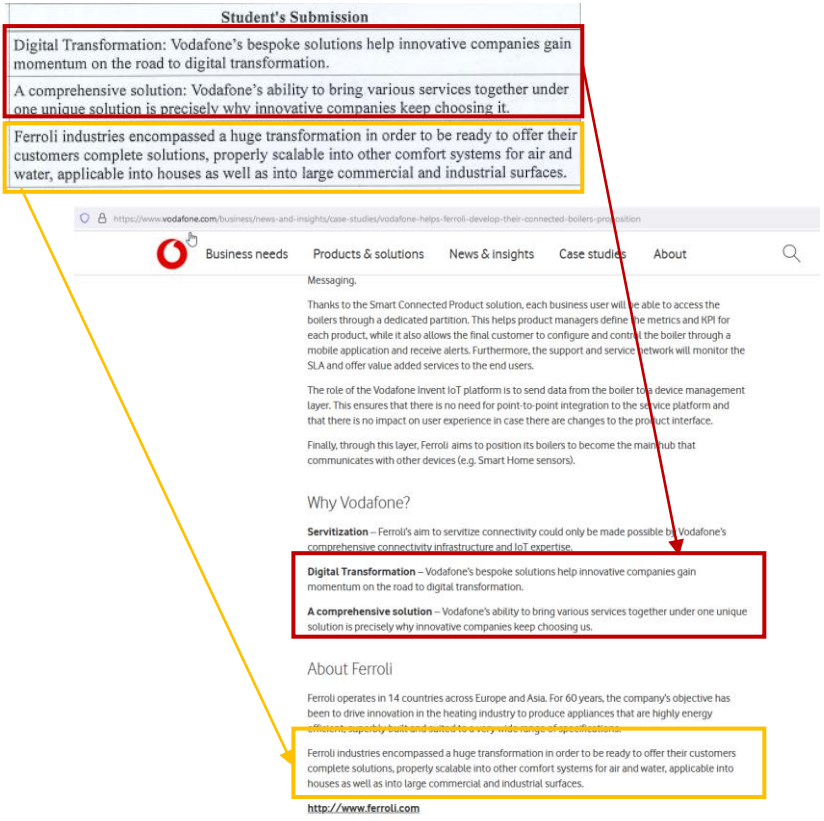
"The Internet was developed from the original ARPANET. Internet was based on the idea that there exist multiple independent networks of rather arbitrary design. It began with ARPANET as the pioneering packet switching network, and soon included packet satellite networks, ground-based packet radio networks and other networks. The Internet as we now know it embodies a key underlying technical idea, namely that of open architecture networking."

The following shows a proper incorporation of the information provided in that article:

"The Internet was developed from the original ARPANET. It attempted to connect a number of independent computer networks that might have arbitrary design.[1] Initially, only packet switching network was included. Packet satellite networks, ground-based packet radio networks and other networks were introduced at a later time. The key idea of Internet is the so-called "open architecture networking"." [1]Barry M. Leiner et al., A Brief History of the Internet, Online article available at http://www.isoc.org/internet/history/brief.shtml.

Example 2:
A case of plagiarism in an Assignment.

Extracts from student's submission:



Section 4: Copying Materials from Third-party Services

A third party shall include but not limited to online platforms which require log-in, companies providing tutoring services or essay / dissertation mills, private tutors, past teachers, alumni of the University, relatives and friends of the student concerned, as well as members of CUHK.

The following scenarios are some examples of using third-party services:

- Knowingly using materials provided by a third party, including subscription of paid / free online platforms
- Obtaining solutions provided by online platforms or via other people
- Employing or using services provided by a third party
- Knowingly using materials obtained by anyone who has employed or used the services provided by a third party
- Posting exam / assignment questions on online platforms
- Providing services as a third party
- Sharing of any materials obtained from the employment or use of services provided by a third party to other students

Reference:
https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_(2013-14)/p06.htm

Section 5: Copying Materials Generated by AI Tools

Students should take note of the followings when considering the use of AI tools in studies:

- Observe the Guidelines set by the University:
  "Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessments - A Guide for Students" https://www.aqs.cuhk.edu.hk/documents/A-guide-for-students_use-of-AI-tools.pdf
- Follow strictly the instruction and/or permission given by the course teachers, regarding the use of AI tools in teaching, learning and assessments

Improper/unauthorized use of AI tools may constitute acts of academic dishonesty. Students should be cautious of the followings, which may result in improper/unauthorized use of AI tools in learning:

i. Use AI tools in completing assignments/assessments without prior permission;
ii. Hand in an AI-generated work as one's own;
iii. Use AI tools to cheat in a course;
iv. Use AI tools that are not up to date and result in the use of outdated and inaccurate resources; and
v. Use AI tools in an unethical and irresponsible manner.

Reference: *Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessments - A Guide for Students* at https://www.aqs.cuhk.edu.hk/documents/A-guide-for-students_use-of-AI-tools.pdf

Section 6: Proper Referencing / Citations

In general, there shall be three components in a citation/acknowledgement:

i. Setting the relevant text apart by quotation marks, or in some cases by using a separate indented paragraph. (This is not needed if the text is not a verbatim quote but a paraphrase.)

ii. A reference to the original source. This will be indicated by a numeral such as [1], which indicates that the source is to be given in the reference list.

iii. A bibliography, giving the list of references. This is usually given at the end of the article/paper, but may sometimes be given at the end of each page.

Importantly, just (3) alone is NOT enough. In other words, just listing the source in the bibliography is no defence against a charge of plagiarism. The reason is that inclusion in the bibliography only means that the item was consulted; it does not indicate that the item was copied or used verbatim.

Examples of improper referencing / citations

Verbatim use of source material

Original source (Example 1): Peter Berger, *Invitation to Sociology* (London: Penguin, 1991), p 87

> Where human beings live or work in compact groups, in which they are personally known and to which they are tied by feeling of personal loyalty (the kind that sociologists call primary groups), very potent and simultaneously very subtle mechanisms of control are constantly brought to bear upon the actual or potential deviant. These are the mechanisms of persuasion, ridicule, gossip and opprobrium.

Improper use (Example 1): Except for the first sentence, the rest is a verbatim copy of the original, without quotation marks and without acknowledgement. This is a clear case of plagiarism.

> Social members experience various modes of control exerted over them. Where human beings live or work in compact groups, in which they are personally known and to which they are tied by feeling of personal loyalty (the kind that sociologists call primary groups), very potent and simultaneously very subtle mechanisms of control are constantly brought to bear upon the actual or potential deviant. These are the mechanisms of persuasion, ridicule, gossip and opprobrium.

Improper use (Example 1): The following extract, again without quotation marks and without acknowledgement, also constitutes plagiarism.

> Where human beings live or work in primary groups, very potent and subtle mechanisms of control are brought to bear upon the deviant members. These are the mechanisms of persuasion, ridicule and gossip.

Paraphrase and translation

Original source (Example 1): Peter Berger, *Invitation to Sociology* (London: Penguin, 1991), p 87

> Where human beings live or work in compact groups, in which they are personally known and to which they are tied by feeling of personal loyalty (the kind that sociologists call primary groups), very potent and simultaneously very subtle mechanisms of control are constantly brought to bear upon the actual or potential deviant. These are the mechanisms of persuasion, ridicule, gossip and opprobrium.

Improper use (Example 1): In the following example, the exact words are changed; even the sentence structure is changed, but the sense of the original is kept. This is called a paraphrase. If the original source is not acknowledged, this still constitutes plagiarism.

> In primary groups, in which people knows each other personally, deviants (actual or potential) are restrained by delicate mechanisms of social control, including persuasion, ridicule, gossip, opprobrium, etc.

Improper use (Example 1) : In the following example, the source is paraphrased and also translated. If the original source is not acknowledged, this still constitutes plagiarism.

> 在社會學家稱為初級團體的群體中，越軌者承受著極細微但強而有力的社會控制，例如說服、嘲笑、閒話及侮辱等。

Reference: Detailed guidelines on proper use of source material at https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_(2013-14)/p02a.htm

Section 7: Penalty Scheme (excerpt from the University penalty scheme)

The minimum penalty for plagiarism & undeclared multiple submissions formulated by the Senate Committee on Student Discipline is highlighted below:

- **First-time offender** will receive one demerit on the academic transcript that may be reviewed and a zero mark for that component of the course. Moreover, he/she will be required to complete relevant training in academic honesty.
- **Second- or more-time offender** will receive two demerits (of which one will remain in the University's record permanently) on the academic transcript and a failure grade for the course concerned.
- According to the University regulations, students who have received a **total of three or more demerits** will be reported to the Senate Committee on Student Discipline for final decision, which can be suspension/termination of studies.
- **Students who share their work with others and result in their work being copied** will be considered as having committed plagiarism. The penalty will be one demerit (reviewable or non-reviewable). Moreover, he/she will be required to complete relevant training in academic honesty.
- According to University policies, **each student in a group work** is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions should there be any plagiarized contents in the group work, irrespective of whether he/she has contributed directly or indirectly to the plagiarized contents.

Note: The demerit(s) (if reviewable) will be removed from the University's record by the time of graduation of the student concerned if no further offence is committed and the required training in academic honesty is satisfactorily completed.

Students are strongly advised to familiarize themselves with the University guidelines on Academic Honesty at

https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/

and the penalty guidelines at

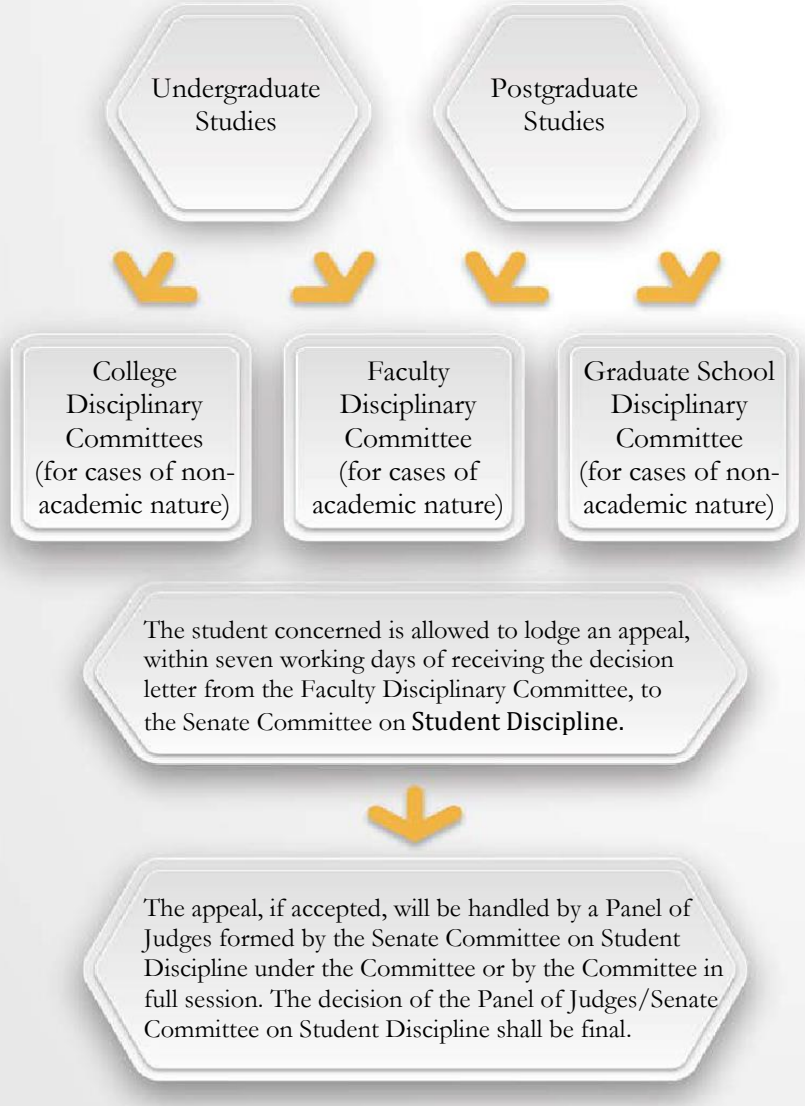
https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_(2013-14)/p06.htm

Section 8: Examples of Established Offences

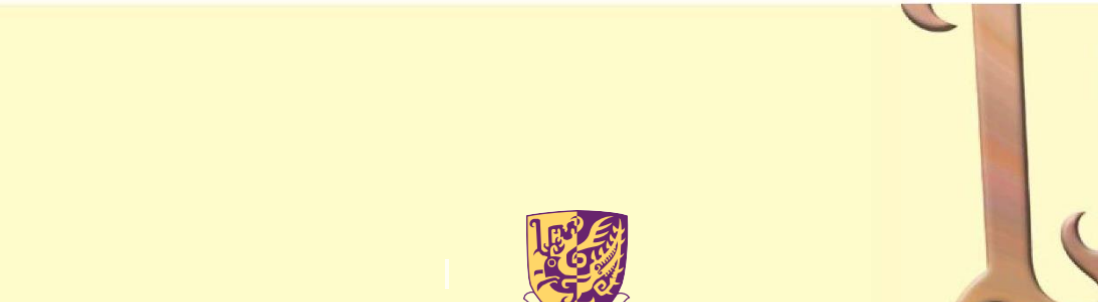
Some common examples of established offences are listed below to facilitate students' understanding on certain unaware mistakes.

Case of academic dishonesty	Examples of established offences
Plagiarism	1. Quoting references from online sources without proper citations 2. Sharing own works to others, regardless of intention, and resulted in copying 3. Obtaining other's works by any means, and resulted in copying 4. Submitting the file of other's work as one's own work intentionally or mistakenly 5. Quoting references from / obtaining previous student's (senior-year students or graduates) work without proper citations
Use 3rd Party Service	1. Knowingly using materials provided by a third party, including subscription of paid / free online platforms 2. Posting exam / assignment questions on online platforms 3. Obtaining solutions provided by online platforms or via other people
Violation of Examination Rules	1. Talking before the collection of answer script 2. Continue writing after "Pens-down" announcement

Section 9: Procedures for Handling Student Disciplinary Cases



When the disciplinary case involves students belong to different Faculties/Colleges or involves both undergraduate and postgraduate students, or when the case is deemed very serious in nature, it shall be handled by the Senate Committee directly, by means of a Panel of Judges formed under the Senate Committee on Student Discipline directly.



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