

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY

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ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY

Assessment Academic Misconduct Policy

Aim

The aim of this policy is to ensure that there are no acts that seek to undermine the integrity and validity of assessment and the certification of the qualifications.

This Policy aims to ensure that there are systems and procedures for the prevention, identification, investigation and addressing of unacceptable academic practice. Furthermore, it aims to ensure that assessment is carried out in a safe and secure manner and that a commitment to equity guides the College as a higher education provider in enabling student development and achievement.

The Policy will standardise and record any investigation of malpractice to ensure openness and fairness, and will impose appropriate penalties on students or staff where incidents of malpractice are proven.

In order to do this, the College will:

- seek to avoid potential malpractice by using the induction period and the learner handbook to inform students of the College's policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice;
- show students the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources;
- operationalise the electronic detection system of Turnitin, recognising the fact that as student numbers increase, so a more systematic method of detection is required;
- ask students to declare that their work is their own; and provide evidence that they have interpreted and synthesised appropriate information and acknowledged any sources used;
- conduct an investigation in a form commensurate with the nature of the malpractice allegation.
- Train students on the use of Turnitin as and when required and also provide them appropriate awareness on plagiarism and its various shapes and forms. This can be done either by the tutors during classes or through special workshops

Academic misconduct

The term academic misconduct covers any deliberate actions, neglect, default or other practice that compromises, or could compromise the:

- assessment process;
- integrity of a regulated qualification; validity of a result or certificate;
- reputation and credibility of the Awarding Body; or,
- qualification or the wider qualifications community.

Academic misconduct may include a range of issues from the failure to maintain appropriate records or systems to the deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates.

In assessing the severity of any offence the College will use its own designed framework as a standard measurement of the degree of academic offence and related penalties thereof..

Maladministration

Maladministration is any activity, neglect, default or other practice that results in the College or individual learner not complying with the specified requirements for delivery of the qualification as set out in the relevant codes of practice.

Procedure

The College does not tolerate actions or attempted actions of academic misconduct by students, administrative staff and teaching staff.

The College will enforce penalties and/or sanctions on Students where incidents or (attempted incidents) of academic misconduct have been identified and proven.

A rigorous assessment process will be open and fair when handling incidents (or attempted incidents) of academic misconduct.

The policy on academic misconduct aims to:

- Record the incidents or (attempted incidents) of academic misconduct;
- Inform the Students as soon as practicable by email, phone or by letter;
- Inform the Students of their rights and responsibilities;
- Provide the Students with an opportunity to discuss how they intend to rectify the situation;
- Involve members of the Academic Misconduct Panel to investigate academic misconduct incidents or (attempted incidents);
- Ensure staff fully understand their ongoing role in the process of educating students;
- Handle the investigation in a fair, balanced and timely manner.

The College reserves the right in suspected cases of academic misconduct to withhold the issuing of a certificate whilst the investigation is being carried out. The outcome of the investigation will determine whether or not the certificate is withheld.

Intervention and Support for Students

Students will be taught the process and appropriate formats for recording cited texts and other source materials, including websites, through face-to-face feedback sessions, study-skills class and formative feedback.

It is necessary for all students to sign a declaration for all assessed work to authenticate that it is their own work. This will ensure that when any incidents of academic misconduct have been identified or suspected, it would be considered as evidence which may be used in any investigation.

The students will be made aware of this on each occasion that the document is being signed, confirming that they are agreeing to the statement.

The College has subscribed to the on-line service of Turnitin. Students are trained in its use and use the service to test the authenticity of their work prior to formal summative submission. All assignments are submitted via the VLE and automatically authenticated via Turnitin.

The College has solicited student views on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Turnitin process.

Student Academic misconduct: Plagiarism

By copying and claiming another person's work as your own, including artwork, images, words, computer generated work, such as internet sources, inventions whether published or not without appropriately acknowledging the source and giving credit where credit is due. It is therefore essential that:

- quotations from published and unpublished sources are clearly acknowledged;
- web-based materials are not to be directly downloaded into an assignment and are fully referenced like any other source material;
- students do not incorporate materials/assignments purchased or acquired from internet sites or commissioned from sources which write assignments for payment;
- paraphrasing of material from others must be clearly referenced;
- students do not normally incorporate materials previously submitted at this or any other institution towards the completion of an award;
- sources of illustrations, photographs maps and statistics are acknowledged;
- unless students have been instructed to produce a group assignment, students must produce work which is uniquely their own;
- where work is done as part of a group the submission sheet should include a list of all students who contributed to this work.

Student Academic misconduct: Collusion

This offence is committed whereby a student works together with other students to produce work and then the group work is submitted for assessment as individual work. All parties involved in collusion are considered to be equally guilty of this offence and all will be subject to both the College and the awarding organisation guidelines.

Student Academic misconduct: Impersonation

By pretending to be someone else in order to produce work for another student or arranging for another person to take the place of another student in an assessment or examination.

Student Academic misconduct: Fabricated Data

By making up or fabricating data. Fabricated data is defined as any data presented as part of a formal assessment and which has not been obtained by legitimate means of experimentation or enquiry and/or there is insufficient evidence to support its validity. Fabricated data also includes any instance where existing data has been falsified.

Contract cheating (purchasing)

This involves the purchase of assignments from websites offering answers to specific assignment questions. The source of such assignments is currently the focus of government action. All such activity is high level academic misconduct.

Student Academic misconduct: Inappropriate Material

This offence is committed by the inclusion of inappropriate, offensive, discriminatory or obscene material in assessment evidence. This includes vulgarity and swearing that is outside of the context of the assessment, or any material of a discriminatory nature (including racism, sexism and homophobia).

Student Academic misconduct: Inappropriate Behaviour

By inappropriate behaviour during an internal assessment that causes disruption to others. This includes shouting and/or aggressive behaviour or language and having an unauthorised electronic device that causes a disturbance in the examination room.

Who will be involved in the academic misconduct Investigations?

- Course Assessors/Tutors;
- Programme Leader
- Academic Misconduct Panel

Note: Student representatives must not be involved in such cases.

Who will contact the Student?

- Academic Misconduct Panel

The Academic Misconduct Panel will determine the penalty or penalties that Student may receive after all the processes and procedures have been explored during the course of the investigation. Such penalties will be in line with the College designed standard of measurement.

What are the timescales?

Where any form of academic misconduct is proven the student will be given time to re-submit their work with the next assignment submission deadline which are normally at the end of each term.

The opportunity to resubmit or rework the assignment will be in line with the College Assessment Policy standard of measurement of offence table.

The process for handling Academic Misconduct:

1. A student whose case is to be considered by the Academic Misconduct Panel shall be notified in writing.
2. If, at the time appointed for the meeting, a student does not appear, the panel may proceed to hear the case if it is satisfied that proper notice of the meeting has been given to the student, and there are no grounds for believing that the student might have good reason for not attending; otherwise the meeting shall be adjourned and a new date shall be set. If it is decided to deal with the case in the absence of the student, no additional material shall be introduced which is not contained or referred to in the particulars notified to the student.
3. In determining the facts of the case, the following stages are involved in the sequence indicated:
 - the finding of the primary facts of the case;
 - the hearing of any pleas in mitigation;
 - the finding of secondary facts, i.e., the reaching of a conclusion or conclusions which, in the judgement of the Panel, can reasonably be drawn from the primary facts;
 - in cases where it has been established that an offence has been committed, report to the Assessment Board as to the penalty/penalties which have been determined.
4. Using the evidence before it, Academic Misconduct Panel will normally determine whether on the balance of probabilities an offence has been committed.

Communication to Assessment Board

All cases shall be reported to the Assessment Board. Assessment Board must not attempt to reconsider a case that has been already determined by Academic Misconduct Panel. The function of the Assessment Board in such cases is to implement the recommendation, having regard for any applicable regulations.

Penalties for Academic Misconduct

Re-assessments in units that are failed as a consequence of academic misconduct shall be capped at Pass. The following tariff of penalties shall be applied to students found to have committed acts of academic misconduct in assessed work other than examinations

Type of misconduct	Penalty
First offence where the plagiarism or collusion is greater than 20% of the element of assessment.	Written warning and a Fail Grade - with opportunity to rework assessment but grade capped to Pass
Second offence of any degree in any unit within the same programme of study	Further written warning and a Fail Grade- with opportunity to rework assessment but grade capped to Pass
Third offence of any degree in any unit within the same programme of study	Repeat the unit but grade capped to Pass
Any subsequent offence anywhere within the same programme of study	Student expelled from the Institution

Staff Academic misconduct:

The following are examples of what the College considers to be academic misconduct by staff.

- Failing to keep awarding body assessment records safe and secure.
- Altering assessment and grading records without the proper authority.
- Influencing the outcome of assessment by producing work for Students or providing support that influences the grade awarded.
- Producing false witness statements.
- Allowing evidence which is known not to be the Students own work to be included in assessment.
- Facilitating and allowing impersonation and collusion.
- Inappropriate use of the reasonable adjustments and special considerations policy, where the support has the potential to influence the outcome of the assessment.

- Making fraudulent certification claims and/or claiming for a certificate prior to the Student completing all the requirements for assessment.
- Obtaining unauthorised access to assessment and verification material.

Centre Academic misconduct

This is normally focused on insecure storage of assessment instruments and marking guidance.

- Misuse of assessments, including inappropriate adjustments to assessment decisions.
- Failure to comply with requirements for accurate and safe retention of Learner evidence, assessment and internal verification records.
- Failure to comply with awarding body procedures for managing and transferring accurate Learner data.
- Excessive direction from assessors to Students on how to meet national standards.
- Deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates

The policy also concerns actions that:

- compromise, attempt to compromise or may compromise the process of assessment
- undermine the integrity of any qualification or the validity of an exam result or certificate; and/or
- damage the authority, reputation or credibility of the College, awarding body or any officer or employee

The Management team takes seriously any suspected or reported case of academic misconduct or maladministration, which may be the result of a deliberate act, neglect, or failure in a practice or system, or due to actions of individual(s).

The Management Team will undertake an investigation in cases of suspected or reported academic misconduct.

The College will take appropriate disciplinary actions against the alleged/reported academic misconduct staff and the awarding body will be informed if deemed appropriate depending on the seriousness of the matter

Appeals Procedure

Stage 1 - Review

Students or staff members may request a review of the decision made following the above process. The review is conducted by a panel consisting of representative(s) of the Academic Board including the Principal. The panel will consider the report made initially on the academic misconduct incident, imposed penalties as well as any new information or evidence subsequently provided by other relevant parties. Following a review, the initial decision may be upheld or overturned, or upheld but with a change to the penalties originally imposed.

Stage 2 – Appeal

If the student or staff member does not agree with the outcome of the review, they have the right to take the process to Stage 2, which would involve an independent review of the case. An appeal at Stage 2 will only consider whether the panel set by the College at the review stage applied its procedures consistently, properly and fairly during the original investigation and/or the Stage 1 review and will cover any inconsistencies if noted.

Appeals are heard by a panel chaired by the Principal in the presence of a College Director of Studies with at least one independent member, who is not an employee of the College, an assessor/internal verifier working for Stratford College, or otherwise connected to Stratford College. The appeal panel will have had no involvement with the assessment or the administration of assessments, and have no personal interest in the decisions under consideration.

The appeal panel may uphold the original decision, or overturn it on the grounds that procedures were not properly followed. The appeal panel will not review the original investigation.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that all parties affected by decisions on academic misconduct or maladministration are informed of the outcome of the above processes.

Reporting to the Awarding Body:

Academic misconduct or attempted acts of academic misconduct that have influenced the assessment outcomes will be immediately reported to the Awarding Body and in cases of academic misconduct to the qualifications regulator if there is evidence that results or certificates may be invalid.

- oversee all investigations into suspected or alleged academic misconduct;
- withhold the issuing of results until the conclusion of the investigation, or permanently, where the outcome of the investigation warrants it;
- apply the sanctions and penalties listed in this document in cases of proven academic misconduct;
- report the matter to the regulators and other awarding bodies in accordance with the regulators' General Conditions of Recognition.

- report the matter to the police if a proven academic misconduct involved committing a criminal act.

The College and the Awarding Body reserve the right, in suspected cases of academic misconduct, to withhold the issuing of results or certificates while an investigation is in progress.

Related Policies

Student

Handbook

Staff

Handbook

Student Induction Programme