



Dublin International Study Centre

Academic Integrity Policy

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Academic Integrity Policy

Section One: Introduction

1. DISC is fully committed to upholding the principles of academic integrity, recognising that the objectives of teaching, learning, and service can only be achieved within an ethical framework.¹ DISC adheres to best practices in maintaining academic standards across all forms of assessments.
2. Guidance on academic integrity is available on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Study Smart, and is integrated throughout the curriculum to ensure that learners develop a clear understanding of the associated rules and expectations. Academic Integrity is addressed during learner induction and reinforced through dedicated reinforcement sessions (for both staff and learners).
3. While DISC offers guidance and support on the importance of academic integrity, learners are ultimately responsible for their academic work and conduct. Learners must remain vigilant to avoid engaging in unethical academic practices or breaching academic integrity, as such actions are unacceptable regardless of whether they are intentional or due to a lack of awareness.
4. DISC fully complies with the guidelines and standards outlined by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), which clearly define the expectations for learners, educators, and staff, as well as the consequences of dishonest or unethical behaviour. It is essential that all members of the DISC community understand the implications of academic misconduct and actively uphold the principles of academic integrity. This policy aims to foster a culture of honesty and integrity, supporting the continued excellence and reputation of education at DISC.
5. This policy is designed to establish the structures and resources needed to help learners understand and value academic integrity. It also provides a clear framework for ensuring that any allegations of academic misconduct involving DISC learners are addressed in a thorough, fair, consistent, and timely manner. This policy, along with its associated procedures, applies to all learner-submitted assessment work, regardless of the mode of delivery.

Section Two: Definitions

6. Academic Misconduct refers to the activities that have the effect or intention of interfering with education, the pursuit of knowledge, and/or fair evaluation of a learner's performance. It includes actions that breach the fundamental principles of academic integrity. This includes behaviours such as plagiarism, cheating, fabrication of data, collusion, impersonation, and misrepresentation in academic work assessments or

¹ International Centre for Academic Integrity (2021). The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity (3rd edition). Available at https://academicintegrity.org/images/pdfs/20019_ICAI-Fundamental-Values_R12.pdf
Accessed 20/9/22 4 European Network.

research activities.² This policy outlines various examples of academic misconduct that will be discussed and demonstrated throughout DISC programmes.

Cheating

7. Cheating refers to any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in assessments by dishonest means, such as copying from others or using unauthorised materials. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:
 - **Copying or sharing answers:** Copying answers from another learner during an assessment or sharing answers with other learners.
 - **Use of unauthorised resources:** The use of unauthorised materials, notes, electronic devices, or any other resources not permitted during the assessment.
 - **Communicating with other learners:** During an assessment, either verbally, through gestures, or using electronic devices.
 - **Impersonation:** Having another individual complete an assessment while falsely presenting themselves as the enrolled learner.
 - **Academic Misconduct in Groupwork:** Failing to contribute equitably to group work assignments or claiming credit for work not completed independently.
 - **Unauthorised Collaboration:** Collaborating with others on individual assignments without permission or outside the parameters set by the tutor.
 - **Tampering with Assessments:** Altering, falsifying, or tampering with assessment materials, grades, or academic records.
 - **Fabrication and excuses:** Fabricating excuses or presenting misleading information to obtain extensions or other reasonable adjustments for assessments.
 - **Fabrication of data:** Falsifying or manipulating research data, experiment results, or other academic work to deceive educators.
 - **Subcontracting (also known as Contract Cheating):** Having another person complete all or any part of a piece of coursework on behalf of the learner, paid or otherwise. Section 43A of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 makes it an offence to:
 - Facilitate a learner to cheat in any way.
 - Advertise cheating services to learners.
 - Publish advertisements for cheating services to learners.

² Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Policies and Guidelines. Definition of Academic Misconduct in accordance.
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Plagiarism and collusion

8. Plagiarism occurs when an individual presents another person's work, ideas, or words as their own without appropriate citation or acknowledgement. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):
 - **Direct Plagiarism:** Copying and pasting verbatim text from a source without proper citation.
 - **Paraphrasing Plagiarism:** Rewriting someone else's ideas or work without acknowledging the original source, making it appear as if it is one's own.
 - **Self-plagiarism:** Submitting one's own previously submitted work, either in part or in full, without proper citation or permission.
 - **Mosaic Plagiarism:** Combining text from multiple sources without proper attribution, creating a patchwork of plagiarised content.
 - **Ghost-writing:** Having someone write a paper or assignment on one's behalf.
 - **Collusion in plagiarism:** Collaborating with others to produce work that is not original and passing it off as one's own.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and technology

9. Unethical and unapproved use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and/or Digital/Information Technology. A breach of academic integrity occurs when a learner submits work generated by generative AI, digital tools, or information technologies as their assessments without explicit permission or proper acknowledgement. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Unauthorised and/or unacknowledged use of Artificial Intelligence tools to generate content for assessment purposes.
 - Unauthorised and/or unacknowledged use of paraphrasing or translation software to disguise plagiarism, collusion, contract cheating, or another academic integrity breach.

Section Three: Distinction Between Minor and Major Misconduct

10. Academic misconduct will be categorised as either minor or major. A case of misconduct will be deemed minor when the assessment contains a minimal amount of misconduct that does not compromise the academic integrity of the assessment. This may be due to the learner's lack of understanding of proper academic practices or referencing techniques.
11. Examples of minor academic misconduct include:
 - Poor academic practice (for example, inaccuracies or minor omissions in

referencing and/or poor paraphrasing).

- A low volume of the assessment is subject to plagiarism or collusion.
- Unintentional breaches of examination regulations.

12. Examples of major misconduct include:

- A significant volume of the assessment is subject to plagiarism or collusion.
- Multiple or repeated cases of minor misconduct.
- Subcontracting/contract cheating.
- Intentional breaches of examination regulations.
- Falsification of data.
- Impersonation of an enrolled learner.

13. If necessary, guidance on whether the case should be classified as major or minor misconduct can be sought from the chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel.

Section Four: Development of Learners' Understanding of Academic Integrity

14. DISC requires learners to confirm that they have read and understood the Academic Integrity policy by completing a form on the VLE, Study Smart. Learners are provided with opportunities to cultivate strong academic practices through induction, academic integrity workshops, and periodic refresher sessions throughout the year. Learners also receive training on understanding the functionality of Turnitin and interpreting the reports generated by the system. The use of Turnitin has three purposes:

- A plagiarism detection tool.
- A formative tool to aid good academic practice, help ensure the use of correct referencing techniques, and identify those learners who require extra guidance as early as possible.
- Acts as a deterrent to plagiarism and collusion.

15. Each learner is responsible for understanding and correctly applying referencing practices in accordance with the Harvard referencing style (the official referencing system of DISC). Learners can access guidance on Harvard referencing by referring to the UCD referencing guide, which is available at: <https://libguides.ucd.ie/harvardstyle>. Learners are required to incorporate suitable references and maintain thorough notes on all sources of material, including any content obtained from the Internet.

Section Five: Investigation of Suspected Academic Misconduct

16. Cases of suspected academic misconduct should be identified by staff and submitted to the Programme Manager for review. The Programme Manager will gather the evidence and schedule a meeting with the learner. The learner will be informed that an investigation into misconduct is in progress and that the meeting will offer them a chance to discuss and receive an explanation regarding the evidence.
17. Examples of evidence of misconduct in coursework include:
 - The assessment in question.
 - Turnitin similarity reports.
 - Comparative examples of the learner's prior work.
 - In the case of collusion, anonymised copies of the other learner's work.
18. Examples of evidence of misconduct in exams include:
 - Invigilator reports.
 - Examination reports.
 - Evidence confiscated during an examination.
 - Copies of learners' examination scripts.
19. During the meeting between the learner and the Programme Manager, the evidence will be reviewed, and the learner may be asked questions related to the assessment or be requested to reproduce sections of the assessment to determine whether academic misconduct occurred and to assess the severity. If the learner fails to attend the meeting without a valid reason, the Programme Manager may determine or recommend an appropriate penalty or course of action in the learner's absence.
20. The process following the investigation will vary depending on whether it is deemed a case of minor or major misconduct:
 - Decisions regarding minor misconduct will be made by the Programme Manager, who will impose appropriate penalties. The findings of all minor misconduct investigations will be shared with the Academic Misconduct Panel. In cases where there is uncertainty, the Chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel may be approached for guidance.
 - For instances of major misconduct, the tutor or Examination Officer will submit the evidence and a recommendation to the Academic Misconduct Panel for consideration.

Section Six: Academic Misconduct Panel

21. The Academic Misconduct Panel will evaluate and make decisions on cases of major

academic misconduct as needed, ensuring that decisions are made fairly, consistently, and in accordance with DISC's Academic Integrity policy. Learner identities are kept anonymous, and all proceedings and outcomes are kept confidential, unless the learner has provided explicit consent for disclosure, such as to meet sponsorship or regulatory obligations.

Responsibilities and composition of the Academic Misconduct Panel

22. The Academic Misconduct panel will:
 - Review all evidence related to the alleged misconduct.
 - Provide the learner an opportunity to respond to the allegation.
 - Ask questions to clarify the nature and context of the alleged misconduct.
 - Deliberate and reach a decision on whether misconduct has occurred.
 - Determine the severity of the misconduct and recommend appropriate penalties or actions.
 - Ensure that all proceedings are conducted with fairness, impartiality, and confidentiality.
23. The Academic Misconduct Panel consists of:
 - The Deputy Director - Curriculum & Progression (Chair)
 - The Head of English
 - A Welfare Officer
 - At least one other academic staff member not immediately involved in the relevant assessment(s).
24. Meetings will be convened as required, typically following a referral from a tutor or examination officer. A quorum shall consist of the Chair and at least two academic staff members.
25. The chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel has the authority to assess documented individual mitigating circumstances in order to facilitate the panel's ability to make a well-informed and balanced decision. All cases are assessed anonymously, with identifying information only available to the Chair.
26. The Academic Misconduct Panel will determine the appropriate penalty or actions to be taken by the learner, and these decisions will be accurately documented in the meeting minutes. The decisions of the Academic Misconduct Panel will be approved by the Module Assessment Board (MAB) and communicated to the final Programme Assessment Board (PAB) at the conclusion of the academic year.

Section Seven: Penalties for Academic Misconduct

27. Any penalty applied and/or action required will be determined by the seriousness of the misconduct and any instances of prior misconduct.
28. In cases of minor or unintentional breaches of regulations, a caution may be given to the learner, and a record of this caution will be placed on the learner's record. The learner may also be required to resubmit work or resit an exam.
29. For severe violations involving clear intent to cheat, a deduction of marks significant enough to result in the learner failing the specific module, and potentially the entire programme, may be enforced. Alternatively, it might be considered more suitable to implement a reduction in the overall average percentage attained upon completion of the programme. A record of all penalties applied for academic misconduct will be recorded on the learner's record.

Potential penalties for minor misconduct

- Percentage reduction of the final mark for assessment.
- Resubmission of sections of coursework.
- Full resubmission of the assessment.
- Examination grade set to zero with re-sit required.

Potential penalties for major misconduct

- Percentage reduction of the final mark for the programme.
- Full resubmission of the assessment for a capped mark.
- Examination grade set to zero with re-sit required.
- Assessment grade set to zero with no resubmission permitted.

Levels of warning

30. The following levels of formal warning may be issued with a misconduct decision (the starting point will depend on the seriousness of the infraction):
 - Verbal warning.
 - First written warning.
 - Second written warning.
 - Third written warning.
 - Expulsion.

31. In serious cases of major misconduct, a learner may be expelled, regardless of the number of prior warnings.

Section Eight: Communication to Learners about Academic Misconduct Decisions

32. Learners will typically receive notification of the findings of a misconduct investigation within five working days following the meeting with the Programme Manager or Academic Misconduct Panel session. The learner will be supported with extended guidance on good academic practice. The outcome of all misconduct investigations will be recorded in the learner's academic file.
33. Where it has been determined to be a case of minor misconduct for a first offence, the notification may be verbal; otherwise, a written warning will be sent to the learner by the Programme Manager.
34. Where it has been determined to be a case of major academic misconduct, the provisional decision will be communicated in writing by the Chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel, noting that it is subject to ratification by the Module Assessment Board. If it is a final warning, the learner will be contacted by the Centre Director.

Section Nine: Appeals Against an Academic Misconduct Decision

35. Learners may appeal against decisions made and/or penalties applied concerning academic misconduct.
36. Appeals against a minor misconduct decision made by the Programme Manager will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Panel for consideration in the first instance.
37. The Academic Appeals process should be followed for appeals against the decision of the Academic Misconduct Panel.

Document Control

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