

**Dublin International Study Centre**  
**Academic Misconduct Policy**





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## Academic Misconduct Policy

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 DISC fully embraces the principles of academic integrity as we understand the objectives of teaching, learning, and service can only be achieved in ethical environments<sup>1</sup>. DISC maintains best practice in the implementation of academic standards across all forms of assessments.
- 1.2 Guidance around the academic integrity is embedded across the curriculum to ensure that students have a clear understanding of the rules and requirements. Academic Integrity is addressed during student induction and in dedicated refresher sessions.
- 1.3 Although DISC provides guidance on the significance of academic integrity, students are ultimately accountable for their own academic work and behaviour. Students need to be vigilant to avoid engaging in unethical academic practices or violating academic integrity, as these actions are unacceptable whether they are intentional or due to a lack of awareness.
- 1.4 DISC fully adheres to the guidelines and standards outlined by the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). These guidelines set clear expectations for students, educators, and staff outlining the consequences of engaging in dishonest or unethical behaviours. It is crucial for all members of DISC to be aware of the implications of academic misconduct and to uphold the values of academic integrity to ensure the continued excellence and reputation of education at DISC. This policy sets out to promote a culture of honesty, trust, and accountability.
- 1.5 There have been numerous discussions surrounding the use of Artificial Intelligence in relation to academic integrity. Consequently, DISC has yet to establish a definitive stance on how to properly address the incorporation of AI while upholding the necessary academic standards in programme delivery and student assessment. To this end, DISC has established a focus group to explore the implications of recent technological advancements and the accessibility of AI tools, as well as to develop policies and guidelines for their utilization. Prior to establishing a settled position, DISC's current academic policies and procedures do not specifically address the use of AI tools. In order to address any area of ambiguity during this period of decision-making, students are being advised that utilizing AI tools could potentially result in a student being subject to the academic misconduct policy under the definition of subcontracting which is outlined below.
- 1.6 The aim of this policy is to establish the structure and resources necessary for

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<sup>1</sup> 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](https://academicintegrity.org/images/pdfs/20019_ICAI-Fundamental-Values_R12.pdf) Accessed 20/9/22 4 European Network

students to comprehend and appreciate academic integrity, as well as to create a robust framework for a thorough, impartial, consistent, and prompt procedure in cases where a student at DISC is alleged of academic misconduct. This policy, along with any related procedures, is applicable to all student-submitted assessment work, regardless of the delivery mode.

## 2.0 Definitions

2.1 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 student's performance. It encompasses actions that violate the principles of integrity, honesty, and fairness in academic settings. This includes behaviours such as plagiarism, cheating, fabrication of data, collusion, impersonation, and misrepresentation in academic work assessments, or research activities<sup>2</sup>. This policy outlines the various examples of academic misconduct that will be discussed and demonstrated throughout the International Foundation Year programme. DISC reserves the right to classify additional instances not listed here as academic misconduct on a case-by-case basis.

2.2 Cheating is attempting to gain an unfair advantage in assessments by dishonest means, such as copying from others or using unauthorized materials. Cheating includes, (but is not limited to):

- Copying or sharing answers: Copying answers from another student during an assessment or sharing answers with other students.
- Use of unauthorised resources: Using unauthorised materials, notes, electronic devices, or any other resources not permitted during the assessment.
- Communicating with other students during an assessment, either verbally, through gestures or using electronic devices.
- Impersonation: Having someone else take an assessment on one's behalf, pretending to be the legitimate student.
- 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

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<sup>2</sup> Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Policies and Guidelines. Definition of Academic Misconduct in accordance with Irish Educational Standards.

instructor.

- Tampering with Assessments: Altering, falsifying, or tampering with assessment materials, grades or academic records.
- Fabrication and excuses: Creating false excuses or providing misleading information to gain extensions on assessments.
- Fabrication of data: Falsifying or manipulating research data, experiment results, or other academic work to deceive educators.
- Subcontracting (also known as Contract Cheating): Another person completes all or any part of a piece of coursework on behalf of a student, paid or otherwise. Section 43A of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 makes it an offence to:
  - Facilitate a student to cheat in any way;
  - Advertise cheating services to students; and
  - Publish advertisements for cheating services to students.

2.3 Plagiarism occurs when one presents someone else's work, ideas, or words as one's own without proper citation or acknowledgement. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):

- Direct Plagiarism: Copying and pasting verbatim text from 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, in part or in full, without proper citation or permission.
- Mosaic Plagiarism: Combining text from multiple sources without proper attribution, creating a patchwork of plagiarized content.
- Ghostwriting: Having someone write a paper or assignment on one's behalf without disclosure.
- Collusion in plagiarism: Collaborating with others to produce work that is not original and passing it off as one's own.



### 3.0 Distinction Between Minor and Major Misconduct

3.1 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 students' lack of understanding of proper academic practices or referencing techniques. Examples of minor academic misconduct includes:

- Poor academic practice (for example, inaccuracies or minor omissions in referencing. Poor paraphrasing);
- A low volume of the assessment is subject to plagiarism or collusion; and
- Unintentional breaches of examination regulations

3.2 Examples of what might constitute major misconduct include:

- A significant volume of the assessment is subject to plagiarism or collusion.
- Multiple cases of minor misconduct.
- Subcontracting/contract cheating.
- Intentional breaches of examination regulations.
- Falsification of data; and
- Impersonation of a candidate.

3.3 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.

### 4.0 Development of Students' Understanding of Academic Misconduct

4.1 DISC requires students to confirm that they have read and understand the Academic Misconduct policy by completing a form on Studysmart. Students are provided with opportunities to cultivate strong academic practices through induction academic integrity workshops and periodic refresher sessions throughout the year. Students 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 students who require extra guidance at an early a stage as possible; and
- Each student is accountable for comprehending proper referencing practices in accordance with Harvard referencing style (The official referencing system of DISC). Students can access guidance on Harvard referencing by referring to the UCD referencing guide which is available on Studysmart, <https://libguides.ucd.ie/harvardstyle>. Students are required to incorporate suitable references and maintain thorough notes on all sources of material, including any content obtained from the internet. An essay or a report should not solely comprise summaries of other's ideas and texts; instead, students need to exhibit their own critical analysis and assessment of the material presented and discussed. If further advice or guidance is needed, students are encouraged to consult their tutor.

## 5.0 Investigation of Suspected Academic Misconduct

5.1 Alleged cases of misconduct are examined by the appropriate tutor (for coursework) or the examination officer (for exams) who gathers the evidence and schedules a meeting with the student. The student will be informed that an investigation into misconduct is in progress and that the meeting will offer them a chance to discuss and offer explanation regarding the evidence.

5.2 Examples of evidence of misconduct in coursework includes:

- The assessment in question;
- Turnitin similarity reports.
- Comparative examples of the student's prior work; and
- In the case of collusion, anonymised copies of the other student's work.

5.3 Examples of evidence of misconduct in exams includes:

- Invigilator reports.
- Examination reports.
- Evidence confiscated during the course of an examination; and
- Copies of students' examination scripts.

5.4 During the meeting, the evidence will be reviewed and the student may be asked

questions pertaining to the assessment or be requested to reproduce parts of the assessment to ascertain if misconduct took place and to determine the severity. If the student fails to attend the meeting without providing a valid excuse, the tutor/examination officer may decide on or suggest a penalty or course of action in the student's absence.

5.5 The process following the investigation will vary depending on whether it is deemed a case of minor or major misconduct:

- Decision regarding minor misconduct will be made by the tutor or the examinations officer, 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 major misconduct, the tutor or Examination Officer will submit the evidence and a recommendation to the Academic Misconduct Panel for consideration.

## 6.0 Academic Misconduct Panel

6.1 The Academic Misconduct Panel evaluates and decides on cases of major misconduct as needed. Student information is kept anonymous, and the proceedings and outcomes are kept confidential unless the student has given consent to disclose information, such as for sponsorship obligations.

6.2 The Academic Misconduct Panel consists of:

- The Head of Curriculum & Progression (Chair)
- The Head of English
- The Welfare Officer
- At least one other academic staff member not immediately involved in the relevant assessment(s).

6.3 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 to the Chair.

6.4 The Academic Misconduct Panel will determine the appropriate penalty or actions to be taken by the student, 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.

6.5 The Academic Misconduct Panel will be convened, when necessary, at the conclusion of each assessment period (before the corresponding Module Assessment Board) to address significant instances of Academic Misconduct and endorse the outcomes of all minor cases that have been reported.

## 7.0 Penalties for Academic Misconduct

7.1 Any penalty applied and/or action required is determined by the seriousness of the misconduct and any instances of prior misconduct.

7.2 In cases of minor or unintentional breaches of regulations, a caution may be given to the student and a record of this caution will be placed on the student's record.

7.3 For severe violations involving clear intent to cheat, a deduction of marks significant enough to result in the student 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 student'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

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

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

## 8.0 Communication to Students About Academic Misconduct Decisions

8.1 Students will typically receive notification of the findings of a misconduct investigation within five working days following the arranged meeting or academic misconduct panel session. Extended guidance on preventing misconduct investigations will be recorded in the student's academic file.

8.2 Where it has been determined to be a case of a minor misconduct for a first offence, the notification will be verbal, otherwise, a written warning will be sent to the student by the tutor or Examination Officer.

8.3 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 Academic Misconduct Panel, noting that it is subject to ratification by the Module Assessment Board. If it is a final warning, the student will be contacted by the Head of Centre.

## 9.0 Appeals Against an Academic Misconduct Decision

9.1 Students may appeal against decision made and/or penalties applied in relation to academic misconduct.

9.2 Appeals against a minor misconduct decision made by a tutor or the Examination Officer are referred to the Academic Misconduct Panel for consideration in the first instance.

9.3 The Academic Appeals process should be followed for appeals against the decision of the Academic Misconduct Panel.



**Document Control**

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