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# PLAGIARISM POLICY

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## Introduction

This policy aims to ensure and encourage students to adopt good academic conduct in respect of assessment and ensure students are informed of the consequences of academic misconduct.

## Policy Statement

In all assessed work, students should take care to ensure the work presented is their own and fully acknowledge the work and opinions of others through proper referencing and citation. It is also the responsibility of the students to ensure that they do not undertake any form of cheating or other forms of unfair advantage.

## Scope

This policy and procedure apply to all forms of assessment, internal and external. Where Higher Education institutions and or awarding bodies have their published procedures these may take precedence over the Academy policy.

## Legislation

The Human Rights Act 1998 applies to the operation of this policy.

## Responsibilities

All staff has a responsibility to give full and active support for the policy by ensuring:

- a) The policy is known, understood and implemented.
- b) All students on all programmes on all levels must be made fully aware by college staff of how to reference properly material and learning sources used and researched by students
- c) It must be noted that within this policy that academic malpractice committed by Further Education students will be managed through the Course team. Offences committed by Higher Education students will be managed through the course committee and assessment/examination boards. In all cases, due investigative process as outlined in section 6 below shall be completed, with the results and a provisional recommendation available for consideration by the Coarse Board of Examiners meeting.

## Actions to Implement and Develop Policy

It is appreciated, that the circumstances of individual irregularities and frauds will vary, but all must be vigorously and promptly investigated and that appropriate remedial action is taken. It is an academic offence for a student to act in a manner whereby he/she gains or attempts to gain an unfair advantage. Such acts will be dealt with following the procedure set out in this policy. Such acts shall be dealt with following the College disciplinary procedures.

To authenticate that the work submitted for assessment has been carried out by the student, the College requires all students to use 'Plagscan' software. All Higher Education students will be required to submit an originality report for all assessment coursework that is submitted either in hard copy or electronically. It is the student's responsibility to validate their coursework via 'Plagscan' before submission to the designated lecturer. Training for students on the use of 'Plagscan' will form an integral component of the student's induction programme. For each submission, students will also sign a declaration of ownership of coursework which is available at the reception desk on each campus.

The determination of whether cheating, plagiarism or other forms of unfair advantage (referred to in this document as academic irregularities) has occurred is not a matter for the Examination Board (internal or external) but will be dealt with by Course Team/Committee.

The facts must be established initially by the lecturer and subsequently, any sanction can be applied which may affect the student's overall performance.

An allegation of cheating, plagiarism or other unfair advantage is not the same as proof of the incident.

Once the facts have been established, it is then for the lecturer, course team, course committee to judge the seriousness of the case and to exercise discretion accordingly, having regard to an institutional precedent where appropriate. All confirmed cases of plagiarism will be presented to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee/ Board of Examiners Meeting that has the ultimate responsibility in issuing the appropriate penalties under the guidance of the relevant course committee.

**It is imperative that all lecturer's highlight any concerns of plagiarism or academic malpractice within the assessment feedback provided to students.**

## Definitions and Examples

There are different forms of "academic irregularity" all of which may be the subject of the procedures described below. However, it is not possible to state categorically that, in all cases, every perceived academic irregularity will be proved once that matter is investigated (e.g. the copying of a design or a work of art may not in all instances amount to plagiarism – see below, Section 5.7). Each case will have to be considered on its merits and the basis of the strength of evidence. The following sections are different types of academic irregularities.

## Cheating

Cheating includes:

- Communicating with or copying from any other student during an examination except in so far as the examination regulations may specifically permit this e.g. group assessments.
- Communicating during an examination with any person other than a properly authorised Invigilator or another authorised member of staff.
- Introducing any written or printed materials into the examination room, unless expressly permitted by the examination or programme regulations.
- Introducing any electronically stored information into the examination room, unless expressly permitted by the examination or programme regulations.
- Gaining access to unauthorised material relating to an examination during or before the examination.
- Obtaining a copy of an “unseen” written examination paper in advance of the date and time for its authorised release.
- In any other way, the provision, or assistance in the provision, of false evidence or knowledge of understanding in examinations.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the presentation of work by others as the writer’s own without appropriate acknowledgement. Examples of plagiarism are:

- i. The inclusion in a student’s work of more than a single phrase from another person’s work without the use of quotation marks and Acknowledgement of the sources.
- ii. The summarising of another person’s work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without acknowledgement.
- iii. The substantial and unauthorised use of the ideas of another person without acknowledgement of the source.
- iv. Copying the work of another candidate, with or without that candidate’s knowledge or agreement.
- v. Students should also be aware of AUTO PLAGIARISM which is deemed as a very serious academic offence. “Auto plagiarism occurs where a student’s work is re-presented without being properly referenced.

## Collusion

Collusion exists where a candidate:

- i. Submits as entirely his/her own, intending to gain an unfair advantage, work done in collaboration with another person.
- ii. Collaborates with another student in the completion of work that is intended to be submitted as that other candidate’s unaided work.
- iii. Knowingly permits another student to copy all or part of his/her work and to submit it as that candidate’s unaided work.

## Falsifying Data

The presentation of data in laboratory reports, projects etc. based on experimental work falsely purported to have been carried out by the student, or obtained by unfair means.

### Personation

“Personation” is the legal term of what is usually referred to by the layperson as “impersonation”. Personation is thus the assumption by one person of the identity of another person with the intent to deceive or to gain an unfair advantage. It may exist where:

- i. One person assumes the identity of a candidate, intending to gain an unfair advantage for that candidate;
- ii. The candidate is knowingly and willingly impersonated by another to gain an unfair advantage for himself/herself.

### Ghosting

Ghosting exists where:

- i. A student submits as their work which has been produced in whole or part by another person on their behalf e.g. the use of a ghostwriting service i.e. buying assignments off the internet;
- ii. A student seeks to make a financial gain or another material gain by using work, which they have written or produced, available to another student.

### Dishonest Practice

The use of any other form of dishonest practice not identified by the above definitions.

## Procedures used to deal with the above

### Initial Procedure for Course Assessment.

- i. When an academic irregularity is suspected, the member(s) of the academic staff concerned should first discuss the matter informally with the student(s). The student will be allowed to present his/her case.
- ii. If the student(s) concerned admits to the academic irregularity, then the member(s) of academic staff concerned shall report the matter and the outcome to the Course Team/Course Committee within two working days, for the Course Team to determine the action to be taken.
- iii. In cases where the student admits misconduct, the student should be required to sign a letter to that effect. The student should also be allowed to declare academic misconduct in other work that they have submitted. This statement will be held on file for the duration of the student’s course.
- iv. If this informal meeting does not resolve the matter the member(s) of staff concerned should then, within three days or as soon as reasonably practicable following the discovery or allegation, report the matter in writing to the Course Director. The report should contain full details about the circumstances surrounding the alleged irregularity including, if appropriate, photocopies of the student’s work.

### Initial Procedure for Examinations.

- i. Where an academic irregularity is suspected in an examination, the Invigilator concerned will inform the Exams Office, and in the presence of that colleague will inform the student of his/her suspicions and annotate the student’s script. The student will also be advised by the Invigilators that a full report will be submitted following the examination.
- ii. The Invigilators will seek to confiscate any relevant evidence (for example, any unauthorised material) and allow the candidate to continue with the examination. However, if the candidate persists with the irregularity he/she will be expelled from the room. The candidate will also be expelled from the room if he/she refuses to submit any suspected material to the Invigilators.

- iii. Immediately following the examination, the Invigilator will submit a full report of the matter to the Exams Office. This form will be returned to the Exams Office who will then provide copies to both the Quality Performance Unit and Course Co-ordinators/Programme Administrator / Course Director along with any supporting evidence.
- iv. If the student(s) concerned admits to the academic irregularity at the point of being challenged by the Invigilators, then the Invigilator's report will go to the Course Team, within two working days, for the Course Team to determine the action to be taken.
- v. If a student considers other students/students to be gaining an unfair advantage during an examination, it is the responsibility of the student to bring this to the attention of the Invigilator. However, no action can be taken unless the infringement of rules on behalf of the student/students is subsequently verified by the Invigilator.

#### **Action by Academic Investigating Panel.**

- i. Where an allegation of an academic irregularity has been made following paragraph 6.1 or 6.2 and not resolved through the defined informal procedures, the matter will be investigated as soon as reasonably practicable following the discovery or allegation of the irregularity by an Academic Investigating Panel to be convened comprising of at least three people, of which two will be members of academic staff external to the School concerned and nominated by the Head of Higher Education and/or College Quality Manager.
- ii. The Examinations officer should notify the members of the Panel and the student(s) concerned, within three working days\* of the receipt of the report, of the date, time and place of the meeting of the Panel. \*Note: If an alleged irregularity comes to light during a set of examinations, and the candidate still has some examinations to sit, this timescale shall be extended to three working days after the end of that particular set of examinations
- iii. The student(s) should be provided by the Panel with full details of the alleged irregularity and informed of his/her right to appear before the Panel, accompanied by a friend or representative of his/her choice and to submit a written statement of mitigation concerning the alleged irregularity. Failure by the student(s) to appear before the Panel or to submit a statement will not prevent the investigation proceeding.
- iv. The Panel may call witnesses, as appropriate, to substantiate the allegations, and will not unreasonably refuse permission for the staff or student(s) concerned to call such witnesses as they deem appropriate.
- v. The Panel will interview the student(s), staff, and witnesses as appropriate, consider the student's written statement, and decide on the basis of the student's statement and the supporting evidence. The student will withdraw while the Panel deliberates.
- vi. The order of proceedings is as follows;
  - Statement of the case against the student(s) and production of evidence in support of it.
  - Statement of the case for the student(s) and production of evidence in support of it.
  - Reply to the case of the student(s) provided that, except by leave of the Panel, a reply will not be allowed where the student has produced no evidence other than his/her own.
- vii. Evidence may be received by the Panel by the oral statement, written and signed statement, or statutory declaration.
- viii. Each member of the Panel has equal status save that, in the event of a disagreement about the decision, the decision shall be made by a majority of those present.
- ix. If the student(s) has attended, he/she will be informed of the Panel's decision after the meeting. The Panel will report the outcome in writing to the student within two working days of the Panel's decision. The student(s) has no right of appeal at this stage (but see below paragraph 7).

### Action by Examination Board.

- i. If an Academic Investigating Panel is satisfied that there has been no academic irregularity the Examination Board will consider the candidate's case in the usual way and will disregard the original allegations of irregularity.
- ii. If an Academic Investigating Panel is satisfied that there has been an academic irregularity, or if the student admits (under paragraphs 6.1 or 6.2) that an academic irregularity has taken place, the Examination Board will take all the factors reported and evidence submitted into account in its consideration of the candidate's case and decide on the action to be taken appropriate to the gravity of the case. This includes the power to fail the candidate for all or part of the assessment in respect of which an academic irregularity has been found to have occurred and to determine whether the candidate should be permitted to continue on the course with or without reassessment, or whether the candidate is not permitted to continue on the course.
- iii. It is the Examination Board's responsibility to decide the results of a unit affected by the academic irregularity applying relevant action, and, for courses run in partnership with a University, for the course committee to determine whether the candidate can continue on the course in the light of the overall performance, and in the light of any recommendations from the Examination Board.
- iv. Members of the Examination Boards who have been involved with the investigation of the academic irregularity are not permitted to be present during discussion of the matter by the Board.
- v. Where the academic irregularity concerned is one of plagiarism, the Examination Board may refer to the following guidelines in deciding on what action is appropriate (under paragraph 6.4) and the following penalties may apply (see Appendix 1).
- vi. If a candidate is deemed by the course committee to have failed part of an assessment, because of a finding of an academic irregularity, then the examination board cannot compensate for the failure

## Students Right of Appeal

The student has a right of appeal against the decision of the Examination Board following the appeals procedures (as set out in the College Appeals Policy for internal assessment).

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The Academic Standards & Policy Committee will monitor the operation of the policy by:

- a) Receiving termly reports on appeals received and their outcomes.

## Related Policies

- Assessment Policy
- Late submission of course work Policy
- Conduct for internally set examinations Policy

## **Monitoring and Review**

The College will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of this policy.

The College will ensure that adequate resources are made available to promote this policy effectively and is committed to reviewing this policy regularly, in consultation with the recognised trade unions, statutory organisations such as the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and line with models of good practice.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**(Director)**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**(Chairman of Governing Body)**

# Appendix 1: Framework of Penalties for Plagiarism Offences in Taught Programmes

## Penalties

The College Policy provides simple, graduated Frameworks of Penalties for plagiarism relating the severity of penalties to the number of offences and gives individual, formative advice after the first offence. The Framework of Penalties below is taken from the Ulster University Plagiarism policy (<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/academicservices/student/plagiarism.pdf>) and has been adapted to the South West College policy. There are both academic and disciplinary consequences. Disciplinary penalties in taught courses are not applied until the second offence. Offences are counted cumulatively, regardless of any change of course but do not carry over from undergraduate to postgraduate level.

The Framework of Penalties for taught programmes is as follows.

<b>1st Offence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in marks based on the exclusion of plagiarised work.</li> <li>• Formative interview with module coordinator and/or lecturer.</li> </ul>
<b>2nd Offence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism.</li> <li>• Interview with Curriculum Manager and/or Course/Subject Director and/or lecturer.</li> <li>• Formal letter of reprimand from Head of Higher Education. Copy placed on student file.</li> </ul>
<b>3rd Offence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism and the maximum mark of 20% (UG)</li> <li>• Case referred to Head of Department with the recommendation of reprimand and fine not exceeding the maximum amount permitted following the Student disciplinary policy at the time of application of the penalty.</li> <li>• Interview with Head of Department.</li> <li>• Formal letter of reprimand from Head of Department. Copy placed on student file.</li> </ul>
<b>4th Offence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark of zero for the module.</li> <li>• Case referred to the college senior management team and the relevant University Faculty Subject Partnership Manager being informed with a recommendation of suspension (1 semester or 1 year as advised by Faculty) or discontinuation of studies at South West College</li> <li>• Outcome recorded on student file.</li> </ul>
<b>Plagiarism detected after graduation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The award may be revoked.</li> </ul>

**NB:** These penalties are only guidelines and are not mandatory; if used, they may need to be adapted, for example, to suit the marking scheme used for the assessment in question (e.g. by deducting several marks rather than a percentage). It is also important that academic staff use their professional judgement if plagiarism cases arise. It is most important that academic staff highlight concerns of plagiarism within their feedback to students and also bring this to the attention of the course committee and examination board.