

RG46 Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy		Effective date: 03/2024
Authorised owner: Graham Lewis	Department(s) / Project team(s): PEDaL	Last revision: 03/2024
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RG46 Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

1 Introduction

Academic integrity is a set of values that define honest and ethical behaviour in academic settings. It applies to everyone involved in academia. There are a few core principles that underpin academic integrity:

Honesty: This means being truthful in your work, giving credit to others' ideas, and presenting information accurately.

Trust: This involves transparency, both in trusting others and being trustworthy yourself.

Fairness: Everyone should have a fair chance to succeed, and rules should be applied consistently.

Respect: This means respecting the work of others, being open to feedback, and taking responsibility for your own actions.

Academic integrity is more than just avoiding plagiarism or cheating. It's about taking an active role in learning, being honest about the effort put in, and following the rules.

Here are some specific ways that delegates can uphold academic integrity:

- Properly citing sources in their written work
- Completing their own work on assignments and exams
- Following proper research protocols
- Reporting any instances of academic misconduct they witness

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In order to demonstrate academic integrity, delegates must produce their own work, acknowledging explicitly any information or material that has been included from other sources, or that has been developed through collaboration with others. Delegates must present their own findings, conclusions, and data based on appropriate and ethical practice.

Academic misconduct is a breach of the values of academic integrity, such that a delegate may gain an unfair advantage. It includes, but is not limited to, passing off others' work as their own by failing to cite or reference in accordance with accepted standards, commissioning or buying work from a third party, or using 'artificial intelligence' software/apps to generate all or a part of an assignment.

2 Academic misconduct

Plagiarism is the most well known form of academic misconduct and is the presentation by a delegate, as their own work, of a body of material (written, visual or oral) which is wholly or partly the work of another. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to,:

- Copying – i.e. submitting another's work as their own. The original work could be, for example, from the internet, a publication, a fellow delegate, or a delegate from another cohort,
- Failing to indicate and/or acknowledge a direct quote in the text,
- Paraphrasing or synthesising material from a source without acknowledging that source in the text,
- Composing a paragraph by joining together sentences from a number of sources and not indicating and/or acknowledging these sources in the text,
- Using their own previous work in a later assignment without acknowledging it.

Other forms of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to,:

- Fabrication or fraudulent reporting of results, research, or other investigative work,

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- Failure to gain ethical approval for research prior to carrying it out. As outlined in *RG45 Research Ethics Policy*.
- Collaboration with others in the preparation or production of submitted work, unless such joint or group work is explicitly permitted,
- Use, or attempted use, of a ghost-writing service for any part of an assessment,
- Impersonation of another delegate in an assessment, or the employment of an impersonator in an assessment,
- Fraudulently obtaining additional time beyond the published submission deadline.

Real Group considers plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct to be serious offences and will apply robust penalties to any delegate who is found to have engaged in academic misconduct, whether through negligence, academic naivety or deliberate intent.

Delegates must, therefore, reference their work correctly to avoid plagiarism. Guidance is included in the course materials to help delegates understand the nature of plagiarism and academic misconduct and how to avoid it through correct use of referencing. Real Group will use text-matching tools to help identify sections of submitted work that match with other published sources and to verify that these have been referenced appropriately. Delegates are encouraged to submit their draft assignments for formative assessment and when in draft form; formative feedback can be given on inaccurate referencing so that delegates can make the necessary amendments.

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3 Process and penalties

Academic misconduct is usually reported after the final submission process has been completed and marking is underway, but it can be raised at any time should a Tutor or Module Leader suspect misconduct has occurred. When reviewing a report from a text-matching service it is important that Tutors use their academic judgement when considering if there is a potential academic misconduct case; it is common for high scores to be as a result of large quotes, which may be properly referenced, or appendices that refer to specific publicly available policies etc. If there is concern about the authorship of an assignment and there is no documentary evidence to demonstrate this, the delegate should be allowed the opportunity to demonstrate that the work the submitted was entirely their own through the procedure outlined in *RG55 Procedure for a viva voce examination in cases of suspected academic misconduct*.

Once a Tutor or Module Leader has judged that there is a potential academic misconduct case for a certain assignment, or group of assignments, they will begin the below process:

1. The case should be raised with the Programme Leader and the Quality Assurance and Examinations Officer. For cases that relate solely to a high similarity score and the work has been submitted via Campus Online, this can be flagged using the red colour flag for the similarity status indicator.
2. The Quality Assurance and Examinations Officer will update the submission status for the assignment(s) in Gold Vision.
3. The Programme Leader, or the relevant Academic Lead in their absence, will review the case and make a judgement about whether the delegate will be formally referred for suspected academic misconduct. If they do not believe there is a case to be answered they will notify the Quality Assurance and Examinations Officer, who will update the submission status in Gold Vision and no further actions will be taken. If they believe there may be a case to be answered,

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but there is limited documentary evidence, such as when ghost writing is suspected, the Programme Leader may pass the allegation to the Academic and Professional Lead for the programme for consideration under *RG55* for the use of a Viva Voce examination.

- a. For cases of suspected academic misconduct involving delegates registered with Middlesex University, the Programme Leader will determine if the case is serious enough to warrant immediate referral to the University's Academic Misconduct team for consideration (categories B-D as outlined later in this policy).
 - b. If the case is to be referred to Middlesex University the Programme Leader will prepare a report on the suspected misconduct and send this, along with the assignment(s) in question and any other supporting evidence to acmisconduct@mdx.ac.uk
 - c. If the case is being referred to Middlesex University at this stage, steps 5 and 6 in the below procedure will be skipped. Once Middlesex have informed Real Group of the outcome the procedure will continue from step 7.
 - d. If the case is not being referred to Middlesex University at this stage, the below procedure will be followed in full.
4. The Programme Leader, or the relevant Academic Lead in their absence, will email the delegate to let them know that they have been referred for investigation due to a suspected case of academic misconduct, including a brief outline of the case and the assignment(s) it relates to.
 5. The case will be reviewed by the Academic Quality and Compliance Manager, or their nominee, who will contact the delegate by email to present the case made against them, attaching any relevant evidence, and requesting a written response to the allegation(s), including details of any mitigating circumstances which may have affected the delegate, to be submitted by email within 10 working days.
 - a. If the delegate admits to the allegation of academic misconduct, the Academic Quality and Compliance Manager and Programme Leader will determine the most appropriate penalty available for the offence. Step 6 in the below procedure will be skipped.
 - b. If the delegate denies the allegation of academic misconduct, the Academic Quality and Compliance Manager and Programme Leader will review the defence to the allegation given and will either choose to dismiss the allegation or progress the case to an Academic Misconduct Panel.

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- i. In cases where a delegate denies the allegation they will have the right to choose whether their defence to the Academic Misconduct Panel will be via a written statement or by a panel hearing.
6. If a delegate denies the allegation of academic misconduct, an Academic Misconduct Panel will be formed to review the case and to hear the delegate's defence, either in writing or through a panel hearing. The panel will consist of the Academic Quality and Compliance Manager, or their nominee, and two members of academic staff, with at least one of these being someone responsible for overseeing the programme the delegate is studying on (e.g. Director of Pedagogy and Learning, Academic and Professional Lead, Programme Leader, or Deputy Programme Leader). No member of the panel can have been involved in tutoring or marking the delegate on this module/course. One member of the panel will take on the role of Chair.
 - a. The staff members initially involved in raising the concerns over academic misconduct may be asked by the Chair to attend the hearing as witnesses.
 - b. The hearing should occur within 28 days of the date the delegate is notified of the decision to hold one, but no earlier than 7 days after the notification is sent. Real Group will work with the delegate to find the most suitable time to hold the hearing. The delegate will be informed of the names and job titles of the panel members.
 - c. The delegate may be accompanied by a person of their choice. Any individual accompanying a delegate must not participate in the hearing beyond the initial introductions from those present.
 - d. The delegate may object in writing to the appointment of members of the panel, giving grounds for such an objection. The Chair will consider such objections, and at their discretion may alter the panel appointments. If the delegate objects to the appointment of the Chair, the other panel members will consider the objection and may unanimously agree to reassign the Chair role to one of themselves; who at their discretion may then alter the panel appointments.
 - e. The hearing may proceed in the absence of a delegate who has either i) indicated an intention to attend and does not attend, ii) never responded to communications; or iii) indicated they do not wish to attend. The Chair should be content that there is sufficient evidence available to consider the case and that the delegate has been given adequate notice of the meeting and an opportunity to provide a written submission.

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- f. The Panel shall consider its decision in private after the evidence has been heard and shall reach a decision by majority vote, in the light of the evidence presented and on the balance of probabilities, whether the delegate infringed assessment regulations.
 - g. If the Panel upholds an allegation of academic misconduct they will also agree by majority vote the appropriate penalty to be applied.
7. Once a decision has been made whether to uphold or dismiss an allegation of academic misconduct, the delegate will be informed of this in writing within 7 days. This notification will include details of any penalties to be applied.
 8. The Quality Assurance and Examinations Officer will update Gold Vision with the outcome and ensure that any penalty is applied appropriately to the delegate's records.
 9. Where a delegate is registered on a programme which has Fitness to Practise requirements, a major offence will be referred to an appropriate Fitness to Practice process for consideration.
 10. Where a delegate is registered on a programme which is externally accredited/validated and it is a requirement of that accreditation/validation to report cases of misconduct to the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body, Real Group will disclose all required details of confirmed cases of academic misconduct to the relevant body.

4 Appeals

Delegates have the right to appeal the outcome of an Academic Misconduct Panel. For delegates on one of Real Group's postgraduate programmes the appeals process is outlined in RG48 Postgraduate Appeals Policy. For delegates on any of Real Group's other programmes the reason for appealing the decision must be sent by email to the Academic Quality and Compliance Manager, at appeals@realgroup.co.uk, who will review the decision and respond to the appeal within 28 days of it being submitted.

Grounds for appeal are:



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1. Extenuating or mitigating circumstances where, for good reason, the Academic Misconduct Panel was not made aware of a significant factor relating to the delegate's assessed work when it made its original decision.
2. That there was a material error, either in the conduct of the assessment itself, the investigation process or in the proceedings of the Academic Misconduct Panel, which significantly affected the outcome.
3. That there is new and relevant evidence, which the delegate was demonstrably and for the most exceptional reasons, unable to present to the investigating team/Academic Misconduct Panel.
4. That the procedures were not complied with in such a way that it might cause reasonable doubt as to whether the result would have been different had they been complied with.
5. That there is documented evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of an Academic Misconduct Panel, or by one or more members of the team investigating the case.
6. The penalty imposed exceeds the maximum penalty set out in this policy.

A successful appeal will result in the Academic Misconduct Panel reviewing its decision in the light of any new information provided by the delegate, although it does not necessarily mean that the original decision of the Panel will be changed.

5 Penalties

The minimum penalty imposed for an academic misconduct offence shall normally exceed that which would follow if the delegate had merely failed the assessment. The following penalties should be taken as indicative of the maximum penalty that may be imposed for a certain academic misconduct offence.

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All cases will sit on a sliding case of severity. There will be occasions when the misconduct is normally considered minor, but the extent of the deliberation and intention to deceive is such that it fits the criteria of serious misconduct. As a result, the examples given below should be used as a guide to help staff identify procedures, but there will always be an element of academic judgement in determining the level of misconduct and the appropriate action to take.

Misconduct Category	Example Offences
A	Making available one's own work to another student, either intentionally or as a result of negligence, that can be presented as another student's.
A	Isolated use of quotes without the use of quotation marks and citation.
A	Failure to use quotes where the student has cited plagiarised material in the body of the work and/or in the reference list, (secondary referencing).
A	Use of word replacement techniques to hide sources.
A	Inadequate referencing, for example missing citations in paraphrased text (illicit paraphrasing).
A	Extensive use of quotes or close paraphrasing without the use of quotation marks and referencing, where the student has not cited the plagiarised material in the reference list.
A	Close paraphrasing without the use of quotation marks, where the delegate has cited the plagiarised material in the reference list (Sham paraphrasing).
A	Self-plagiarism where the delegate re-uses isolated parts of their own work for which credit has previously been awarded, without citing the original content.
A	Failure to gain appropriate ethical approval for work that is deemed ethically low risk (most literature review studies).
B	Failure to gain appropriate ethical approval for work that is deemed ethically minimal risk. (anonymous questionnaires – participants not identified).
B	Repeat Category A offences.
C/C1	Collusion - Representation of work produced in collaboration with another person or persons as the work of a single delegate.
C	Self-plagiarism where the delegate re-uses extensively their own work for which credit has previously been awarded, without citing the original content.

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C/C1	Copying another delegate's work and submitting some or all of it as if it were the delegate's own.
C/C1/D	Failure to gain appropriate ethical approval for work that is deemed ethically more than minimal risk (e.g., identifiable participants, interviews, focus groups, sensitive topics, risk of physical/psychological harm, personal data processing etc).
C/C1/D	The presentation of data in research work, projects etc. based on work purporting to have been carried out by the delegate but which has been invented, altered, or falsified.
C/C1/D	Where a delegate commissions another party (either paid or unpaid) to complete an assessment item on their behalf.
C/C1/D	Deliberate attempt to gain advantage by unfair or improper means. Such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to deceive specialist text checking software (e.g. Ouriginal or Turnitin) by, for example, using text replacement tools; images in documents instead of text; submitting documents in an alternative format than that required. • Unauthorised use of artificial intelligence in a piece of work submitted for grading.
C1/D	Repeat Category B/C offences
C1/D	Attempting to persuade another delegate or a member of staff to participate in actions that would breach these Procedures.
D	Obtaining access to an unseen test prior to the start of an test.
A/B/C/C1/D	Being party to any other arrangement that would constitute a breach of these Procedures. <i>Penalty will correspond to the nature of the offence and will be in accordance with penalties outlined for each of the above</i>

Misconduct Category	Maximum Penalty
A	<p>The mark for the assignment may be reduced to reflect a delegate's failure to address the assessment criteria in areas of collation of sources and their citation leading to the work being overly derivative/overly reliant on external sources; or failure to gain appropriate ethical approval(s) for work that is deemed ethically low risk.</p> <p>This may result in the assignment failing should the reduction cause the final mark to fall below the minimum pass mark for the module/course.</p>

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B	<p>Failure of the assessment component, with reassessment right where permissible. A fail mark of 0 (20 on the Middlesex University 20-point scale) will be recorded.</p> <p>The mark for the component will be capped at the minimum pass mark for the module/course.</p>
C	<p>Failure of the assessment component, with reassessment right where permissible. A fail mark of 0 (20 on the Middlesex University 20-point scale) will be recorded.</p> <p>The mark for the module/course will be capped at the minimum pass mark for the module/course.</p>
C1	<p>Failure of the assessment component, with no reassessment allowed. A fail mark of 0 (20 on the Middlesex University 20-point scale) will be recorded.</p> <p>To continue their studies a delegate must retake the same (or a substitute) module at the next opportunity where the module result will be capped at the minimum pass mark/grade, and full fee is payable.</p>
D	<p>Failure of the assessment component, with no reassessment or retake opportunities allowed. A fail mark of 0 (20 on the Middlesex University 20-point scale) will be recorded.</p> <p>A delegate will not be allowed to continue their studies, but may be permitted to exit with a lower award.</p> <p>Previously awarded qualifications/credits may be revoked.</p>

Related Documents

RG45 Research Ethics Policy

RG55 Procedure for a Viva Voce Examination in Cases of Suspected Academic Misconduct

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