



QA220 Academic Integrity Policy

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Policy Owner: Deputy President and Registrar

Approving Committee: Academic Council

1.0 Purpose

To set out the code of practice for dealing with instances where students breach academic integrity by engaging in academic misconduct. This applies to both current students and those who have already graduated or left the University.

2.0 Description

Academic misconduct is any attempt to gain or help others gain an unfair academic advantage.

As the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) outline in their [Academic Integrity Guidelines](#):

“Academic misconduct can be either intentional or inadvertent. It can be committed in a variety of ways (including, but not exclusive, to the following):

- Submitting work as your own for assessment, which has, in fact, been done in whole or in part by someone else or submitting work which has been created artificially, e.g., by a machine or through artificial intelligence. This may be work completed for a learner by a peer, family member or friend or which has been produced, commercially or otherwise, by a third party for a pre-agreed fee (contracted); it may be work in which the learner has included unreferenced material taken from another source(s) (plagiarism); it may be use of a ghost writer to carry out assessed work which is then submitted as the learner’s own work; it may be using a previous assignment as submitted by a peer claiming it to be your work; it may be that references have been falsified to give credibility to the assignment and to show evidence of research; it may be a claim for authorship which is false;
- Cheating in exams (e.g., crib notes, copying, using disallowed tools, impersonation);
- Cheating in projects (e.g., collusion; using ‘essay mills’ to carry out the allocated part of the project);
- Selling or simply providing previously completed assignments to other learners;
- Misrepresenting research (e.g., data fabrication, data falsification, misinterpretation);
- Bribery, i.e., the offering, promising, giving, accepting or soliciting of an advantage as an inducement for an action;
- Falsification of documents;
- Improper use of technology, laboratories, or other equipment;
- Helping a peer to do their assignment which develops into the helper doing some or all of the assignment; and
- Sharing or selling staff or institutional intellectual property (IP) with third parties without permission.”



Some additional examples of academic misconduct are:

- Self-plagiarism where you submit work which has previously been submitted for a different assignment without permission/acknowledgement.
- Posting advertisements for services which encourage contract cheating either physically or virtually.
- Submitting all or part of an assessment item which has been produced using artificial intelligence (e.g. Google Translate or other machine translation services/software, generative AI, etc.) and claiming it as your own work.

Academic misconduct can arise through poor academic practice or ignorance of accepted norms of the academic discipline. Schools should ensure that programmes incorporate education around good academic practice for students at all levels.

The penalties associated with academic misconduct are detailed in [Appendix 1](#) and will be made available to all students.

2.1 Terms

2.1.1 Academic Integrity Officer

The Academic Integrity Officer is a central role responsible for educating staff and students on academic integrity, supporting Academic Integrity Advisors, and investigating cases of academic misconduct. The Academic Integrity Officer is a Designated Authority as described in the Student Code of Conduct and has the responsibility and authority for dealing with suspected and reported cases of Academic Misconduct.

2.1.2 Academic Integrity Advisors

Each School will appoint at least one Academic Integrity Advisor (AIA), who is normally a member of academic staff. These advisors are Designated Authorities, as described in the Student Code of Conduct, and have responsibility and authority for dealing with suspected and reported cases of Academic Misconduct. The main role of the Academic Integrity Advisor is to provide advice to those teaching in their school on academic integrity, hold Courageous Conversations (described below) with students and aid the Academic Integrity Officer in investigating cases of academic misconduct when needed.

A list of the current Academic Integrity Advisors will be maintained and made available to all academic staff of the University.

2.1.3 Academic Misconduct Register

When students have been found to have engaged in inadvertent plagiarism or intentional academic misconduct as part of the process outlined in this policy, their name is entered on the Academic Misconduct Register. This Academic Misconduct Register will be managed by the Academic Integrity Officer and appropriate access will be provided to the Academic Integrity Advisors.



2.1.4 Standard of Proof

When dealing with academic misconduct, the accepted standard of proof is that the decision maker is convinced that it is more likely than not that academic misconduct has taken place.

2.1.5 Student Conversations

There are three conversations a student may be invited to have regarding a case of academic misconduct:

- 1) a conversation with a member of the teaching staff,
- 2) a Courageous Conversation with an Academic Integrity Advisor,
- 3) or a conversation with the Academic Integrity Officer.

During the Courageous Conversation or the conversation with the Academic Integrity Officer the student may choose to bring a student colleague of the student's choice or a Students' Union representative (but not any other person or body unconnected with the University). This person may not participate in the interview. The primary purpose of this support person is as a support to the student, not to speak on the student's behalf. It is not appropriate for a member of University staff to attend a student conversation/interview as the student's support person. The University of Galway email address and phone number of this support person will need to be provided in advance of meeting.

Students will be notified of any scheduled conversation via their University of Galway email address. It is expected that the student will check their University of Galway email regularly. Students may request, via email, 5 working days' notice for any such conversation if they need such notice for scheduling requirements.

2.1.6 Misconduct During Official University Exams

If anyone suspects that academic misconduct has taken place during an official exam scheduled as part of the University exam timetable from the Exams Office, then this falls under the Examinations Security Group and the policy QA230 Procedures for dealing with breaches of Examination Regulations (<https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/registry/exams/AC-STD-21-A7-11.3.pdf>) should be followed.

2.1.7 Misconduct in Research Degrees

While the Academic Integrity Policy and the outcomes detailed in Appendix 1 are primarily designed to manage academic misconduct in modules that are assessed for a numerical mark, some cases of academic misconduct appropriate for investigation under this policy may occur in assessments for research degrees where a numerical mark is not awarded. In such cases where academic misconduct is found to have occurred, outcomes from Appendix 1 may be decided (or appropriately adapted), as may recommendations available to examiners of research degree theses (see [QA245 University Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes](#)). It may also be appropriate for such cases to be investigated under [QA514 Research Integrity Policy](#) instead of or in addition to the Academic Integrity Policy.

2.1.8 Graduates of University of Galway

If any student who has already graduated from University of Galway is suspected of academic misconduct during their time as a student at University of Galway, the case should be immediately referred to the Academic Integrity Officer. The Academic Integrity Officer will investigate as outlined below in Section 2.2.3. If the Academic Integrity Officer determines that academic misconduct has



taken place, the case should be presented to the relevant Executive Dean to determine the appropriate outcome from those outlined in Appendix 1.

2.1.9 Maintaining a Safe Learning Space

The University may choose to actively block online resources from campus wired and WiFi networks. Such blocks may be of a temporary or permanent nature and may include (but not be limited to): websites, file sharing sites, torrent sites, cloud-based storage sites and live chat sites, where such online resources are deemed to support or facilitate academic misconduct. University of Galway also states clearly that advertising of any services that promote academic misconduct is in violation of this policy and they may choose to remove any physical advertising for services on campus that they believe expose students to the risk of contract cheating.

2.2 Process for Suspected Academic Misconduct

2.2.1 Teaching Staff Member Suspects Academic Misconduct

A member of teaching staff who suspects academic misconduct should first consider if they believe this is a case of inadvertent plagiarism or intentional academic misconduct of any other kind.

Inadvertent Plagiarism

If it is believed by the teaching staff member, based on the evidence, that this is a case of inadvertent plagiarism, then the member of teaching staff will notify the student via email and will require the student to complete academic integrity training and may additionally choose any of the following:

- Zero marks in relation to a specific component of assessment task
- Assignment marked but with plagiarised sections treated as direct quotes
- Resubmit the work for the full range of marks available
- Reduction in marks for the assessment by stated amount
- Student repeats and resubmits assessment task for a mark of no more than 50%

In addition, study skills training is highly recommended.

Following the assignment of an outcome the member of the teaching staff will enter the case on the Academic Misconduct Register as a case of inadvertent plagiarism with the following supporting information:

- date of submission and discovery of inadvertent plagiarism,
- a description of the assignment involved including the value of the assignment
- an explanation of why inadvertent plagiarism was suspected,
- the year of the suspected student, and
- the outcome assigned to the student.

This is not considered an instance of intentional academic misconduct. A single entry of inadvertent plagiarism on the Academic Misconduct Register will not be considered a “first offence” in the process that follows. Repeated entries on the Academic Misconduct Register for inadvertent plagiarism will be considered by the Academic Integrity Officer and may result in a designation of “first offence” for intentional academic misconduct if the Academic Integrity Officer determines that the nature of the repetition warrants this.



If at any point later in the process the case is returned to the teaching staff member when sufficient evidence of intentional academic misconduct was not found, then the teaching staff member is welcome (if they wish) to still determine inadvertent plagiarism and choose an outcome from the options above.

Intentional Academic Misconduct

In all other cases, when intentional academic misconduct is suspected the member of the teaching staff should speak with an appropriate Academic Integrity Advisor, in confidence, about the case. The teaching staff member will provide the Academic Integrity Advisor with a short report of the incident including:

- a copy of the student work, including date of submission and discovery,
- any evidence for suspecting academic misconduct,
- the year of the suspected student and
- the value of the assignment in the module.

2.2.2 Academic Integrity Advisor Stage

From this point forward, this is the process followed regardless of whether the academic misconduct was referred to the Academic Integrity Advisor by a member of the teaching staff or from another source.

First Offence

The Academic Integrity Advisor will first check if this student has already had a case of intentional academic misconduct on the Academic Misconduct Register. If they have, (in other words they have already engaged in intentional academic misconduct at University of Galway), the case is immediately referred to the Academic Integrity Officer for investigation.

Courageous Conversation (CC)

If the student is not on the Academic Misconduct Register for intentional academic misconduct (in other words this is a suspected first instance of intentional academic misconduct) then the Academic Integrity Advisor will initiate the Courageous Conversation process. (Courageous Conversations were developed in the University of New South Wales and described in this article by Prof. Cath Ellis <https://www.qqi.ie/news/courageous-conversations>). The Academic Integrity Advisor will email each student involved, outline the academic misconduct suspected and offer the option to admit to the academic misconduct sharing all details that they can about the misconduct via email or to participate in a Courageous Conversation. If the student admits to the intentional academic misconduct via email, then the Academic Integrity Advisor may respond via email notifying the student of the associated outcome (in accordance with Appendix 1). The Academic Integrity Advisor will also notify the lecturer of the admission and outcome via email.

The Courageous Conversation is an open discussion between the Academic Integrity Advisor and the student before any formal investigation has taken place. During the Courageous Conversation, the Academic Integrity Advisor will

- Share the details of the alleged misconduct with them again.



- Let the student know that academic misconduct is taken very seriously by the University but at this point in the process the two most serious penalties (suspension or expulsion) are not on the table.
- If they have engaged in intentional academic misconduct, the student is encouraged to share the details of this misconduct with the Academic Integrity Advisor at this stage. If they do so, there will be no formal investigation as long as they share all the details related to the incident. If at any point, it emerges that the student was not fully compliant with this requirement then they may still need to go through a full investigation.

CC Outcome: Student Admits to Intentional Academic Misconduct

If the student admits to intentional academic misconduct, the Academic Integrity Advisor determines the outcome for the intentional academic misconduct (in consultation with the Academic Integrity Officer, if necessary) according to Appendix 1.

The Academic Integrity Advisor then records the instance of intentional academic misconduct on the Academic Misconduct Register including:

- the report from the teaching staff member,
- their own summary of the Courageous Conversation,
- a summary of any additional discussion between themselves and the Academic Integrity Officer,
- the summary of the points assigned to determine the level of academic misconduct using Appendix 1 with accompanying relevant details if needed, and
- the outcome determined.

The Academic Integrity Advisor informs the student and the teaching staff member in writing via email of the result of the Courageous Conversation and the outcome determined.

CC Outcome: Student Does Not Admit to Intentional Academic Misconduct

If the student does not admit to intentional academic misconduct, then the Academic Integrity Advisor must decide if they still suspect intentional academic misconduct has taken place.

AIA Does Not Suspect Intentional Academic Misconduct

If the Academic Integrity Advisor is convinced that intentional academic misconduct has not taken place following their Courageous Conversation with the student, then the Academic Integrity Advisor responds to the student and the teaching staff member via email, shares their conclusion and briefly provides their reasoning for this conclusion.

AIA Suspects Academic Misconduct

If the Academic Integrity Advisor still suspects that intentional academic misconduct has taken place following their Courageous Conversation with the student, then the Academic Integrity Advisor refers the case to the Academic Integrity Officer for a formal investigation and informs the student and teaching staff member via email that this step has been taken. The Academic Integrity Advisor will provide the Academic Integrity Officer with

- the report from the teaching staff member,
- their own summary of the Courageous Conversation,



- a summary of any additional discussion between themselves and the Academic Integrity Officer.

The Academic Integrity Advisor will assist with the ensuing investigation when needed as requested by the Academic Integrity Officer.

If the student fails to respond to the Courageous Conversation invitation within a reasonable timeframe (usually five working days) or does not attend a scheduled Courageous Conversation, the Academic Integrity Advisor should make and issue a decision based on the available evidence.

2.2.3 Academic Integrity Officer Investigates

The Academic Integrity Officer receives cases from Academic Integrity Advisors but also potentially from other sources. If a case is presented to the Academic Integrity Officer from anywhere other than an Academic Integrity Advisor, they may first refer the case to the relevant Academic Integrity Advisor if they deem this appropriate. If the Academic Integrity Officer does not refer such a case to an Academic Integrity Advisor, then they will proceed with an investigation themselves.

The Academic Integrity Officer will initiate an investigation to determine whether intentional academic misconduct has taken place. If intentional academic misconduct has taken place, then the investigation will look to determine the extent or level of the academic misconduct.

This investigation process may include (but is not limited to):

- An interview with the student or students involved. At this interview, the Academic Integrity Officer may invite another member of staff to join them and the student may have a support person with them as described under Section 2.1.5 Student Conversations above.
- An interview with the teaching staff member who referred the case.
- An interview with the Academic Integrity Advisor who referred the case.
- An investigation of metadata associated with any of the files involved including IP addresses.
- An investigation of writing style, language choice, etc. for any written content.
- An investigation of online materials or services to determine if any were used in this instance.
- Information available from Turnitin similarity reports and Turnitin Authorship analysis.

Based on the investigation the Academic Integrity Officer will determine whether it is more likely than not that intentional academic misconduct has taken place.



Intentional Academic Misconduct Not Found

If the Academic Integrity Officer finds it more likely than not that intentional academic misconduct has not taken place following their investigation, then the Academic Integrity Officer responds via email to the student, the Academic Integrity Advisor and the teaching staff member, shares their conclusion and briefly provides their reasoning for this conclusion.

Intentional Academic Misconduct Has Taken Place

If the Academic Integrity Officer finds it more likely than not that intentional academic misconduct has taken place following their investigation, the Academic Integrity Officer determines the level of academic misconduct and associated outcome according to Appendix 1. This may involve the appropriate Executive Dean making the decision on the case in certain major cases of academic misconduct as per the details provided in Appendix 1.

The Academic Integrity Officer then records the instance of intentional academic misconduct on the Academic Integrity Register including:

- the report from the teaching staff member,
- any information/reports provided by the Academic Integrity Advisor,
- a summary of any additional discussion about the case,
- a summary of the investigation and its conclusions,
- the summary of the points assigned to determine the level of academic misconduct using Appendix 1 and any other relevant details, and
- the outcome determined.

The Academic Integrity Officer informs the student, the relevant Academic Integrity Advisor and the teaching staff member via email of the conclusion of the investigation and the outcome determined.

If at any stage the Academic Integrity Officer believes the impact of an outcome is incommensurate with the offence, the Academic Integrity Officer may choose to adjust the outcome. If at any stage the member of the teaching staff is informed that intentional academic misconduct has not been found to have taken place, they may still determine inadvertent plagiarism and assign any of the initial outcomes available to them.



2.2.4 Protection and Confidentiality

If any member of the University community should become aware of potential academic misconduct through observation or information they receive, and if the process outlined previously has not addressed how they should proceed, then they should contact the relevant Academic Integrity Advisor or Academic Integrity Officer to make them aware of the situation. This information will be treated with confidentiality and the University will do its best to ensure that there are no negative consequences for the person who brings this information forward. However, if the person reporting misconduct should be implicated in academic misconduct themselves in any way, they will still be subject to the policy outlined here. The Academic Integrity Advisor (in consultation with the Academic Integrity Officer, if necessary) or the Academic Integrity Officer will determine how best to proceed according to the process outlined above.

2.2.5 Timeline

The intention of everyone involved in enacting this policy should be to implement each step in as timely a manner as possible. It is understood that cases will have unique characteristics and that as a result they may differ in the time taken to process. Each party in the process (teaching staff member, Academic Integrity Advisor, Academic Integrity Officer, Executive Dean) is urged to ensure that their portion of the process is completed in as short a period as possible. In the case where academic misconduct is determined after an exam board has taken place, an outcome can still be assigned and post-board changes can be used to adjust a grade if necessary.

2.2.6 Appeal Process

A decision at the Courageous Conversation stage may be appealed to the Academic Integrity Officer but the student should be aware that this may initiate a full investigation into the matter. A decision of the Academic Integrity Officer may be appealed to the appropriate Executive Dean when the Executive Dean was not involved in the initial decision and outcome. A decision of the Executive Dean may be appealed and it will be assigned to an Executive Dean who did not determine the previous outcome. Details on this process and timelines will be included in the written communication to the student. There is at most one appeal allowed and the subsequent decision is final. Note that once a decision is appealed it is possible that a different (and potentially more serious) outcome may be determined if further information is revealed as part of the appeal process.

2.2.7 Process for Assuring Consistency

The Academic Integrity Officer will conduct an annual review of academic misconduct cases across the whole university. They will pull a random selection of approximately ten cases each of inadvertent plagiarism and intentional academic misconduct from the Academic Misconduct Register and review the cases to ensure policy has been followed. If they find inconsistencies, then they will follow up with the appropriate teaching staff member and/or Academic Integrity Advisor and consider whether further training should be needed.

3.0 Policy Review Process

The policy will be reviewed annually by the T&L committee and any changes needed will be implemented as soon as possible.



4.0 Acknowledgements

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