



Procedure for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Sanction

This procedure should be read in conjunction with DCU's Academic Integrity [Policy](#) and be used as a resource to academic staff dealing with cases of potential breaches of academic integrity. In line with the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management (NAIN Framework), it is recognised that there are six stages aligned to the Lifecycle of Academic Misconduct, this procedure adopts these stages and the supporting guidance contained within.

The process for dealing with alleged academic misconduct is outlined in the flowchart in **Appendix I**.

Breaches of examination regulations are outside the scope of this procedure. If required, please refer to [DCU Examination Regulations](#).

The NAIN Framework outlines nine guiding principles for substantiating suspected cases of academic misconduct:

1. Educate

Ensure all staff and students are aware of the signals that can indicate learner academic misconduct.

2. Investigate

One or two signals do not provide enough evidence to substantiate cheating but can provide cause for further investigation. All suspected cases of academic misconduct should be investigated.

3. Use policy

Cases of academic misconduct should be dealt with in accordance with the DCU Academic Integrity Policy and Academic Misconduct Procedures.

4. Balance of probabilities

Decisions as to the commission of academic misconduct should be based on "balance of probability", not 'beyond doubt'.

The balance of probabilities principle is based on 'clear and convincing evidence' that it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. This is less demanding than the legal test of 'beyond reasonable doubt'.

5. Examine



Look carefully at each aspect of the document and other relevant sources of evidence.

6. Collect evidence

Accumulate a range of evidence that clearly and convincingly establishes the firm belief that academic misconduct is not only probable, but highly probable. The level of evidence must support the assessed severity of the case.

7. Use experience

Decide how much weight to give to each piece of evidence, based on common sense, everyday experience, and experience of previous instances of academic misconduct.

8. Ensure natural justice

Allow the learner to have an opportunity to explain and demonstrate how they developed their assignment.

9. Evaluate

Weigh up all the evidence to form an overall picture that provides clear and convincing evidence on the 'balance of probability' that cheating has or has not occurred.

1. Stage 1: Education and Awareness

Prevention of academic misconduct is far preferable to detection and punishment. Learners should be educated on all aspects of academic integrity, from as early as possible in their learner lifecycle. DCU's Academic Integrity Policy details the education and awareness training provided by the University and the responsibility of both academic and students in promoting academic integrity.

2. Stage 2: Detection and Initial Investigation


The NAIN Framework advises that 'all cases of suspected academic misconduct should be investigated to assure the integrity of the assessment work completed by learners. The purpose of this Stage is to differentiate between cases of academic misconduct and cases whereby the learner has a poor understanding of the writing conventions or requirements for the assessment or examination in question. If the decision is that the work represents poor practice rather than academic misconduct, the work should be marked on that basis and feedback given to the student as to how to improve their practice moving forward. If it is alleged that academic misconduct has occurred, an investigation must be conducted and the evidence of the alleged academic misconduct documented.

3. Stage 3: Full Investigation

Potential cases of academic misconduct should be investigated as soon as possible once suspected and the investigation completed in a timely manner.

If the academic staff member to whom the assessment is submitted is satisfied that there is a case to answer, they must complete a report in writing (**see Appendix III**) to the School Academic Misconduct representative (designated School staff member responsible for managing academic misconduct cases, for example Programme Chair, School Teaching and Learning Convenor).

The report must include:

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- (a) The relevant material (dissertations, essays, code, diagrams, video, audio, web pages, etc.), including a web link for Internet sources.
 - (b) Academic Misconduct: an explanation as to how the student's submitted work constitutes academic misconduct.
 - (c) Sample Evidence: a brief textual analysis – for example, but not limited to, identical work, or portions of work, from different students; presenting others' work as the student's own; absent or misleading references, use of a contract cheating site, and evidence supporting this analysis.

The student's record will be checked for previous instances of academic misconduct. The severity of the alleged academic misconduct will be assessed at School level using the classification detailed in section 4.2 of this document. Depending on the assessed classification the case may either be handled through a local process or referred directly to the University Disciplinary Committee.

3.1 Local Process

An interview will be arranged between the student, member of staff taking the case, and the School Academic Misconduct representative to allow the student concerned to respond to the allegation of academic misconduct. This interview may be conducted electronically or face to face.


The interview panel will involve, at a minimum, the School representative and another academic member of staff (for example, the staff member who identified the alleged misconduct). As part of the interview process, the student will be asked if they have ever had any allegation of academic misconduct upheld before, either in DCU or elsewhere. The allegation of academic misconduct will be explained to the student with the evidence explained. The student will then be given the opportunity to refute the allegation or outline any mitigating circumstances involved in their case.

The student is entitled to have an observer present during the interview. The interview panel must be notified, at least 48 hours in advance of such planned observer attendance, including the name of the observer and their relationship to the student. This observer may not be a legal representative. The role of the observer is as a support and an observer for the student, not an advocate. As such, they will not speak or otherwise intervene in the proceedings.

Communications with the student and interview records must be retained initially by the relevant academic staff member. If the allegation of academic misconduct is not upheld, all records of the alleged instance must be destroyed/deleted. If the allegation is upheld, the records will not be destroyed and will be retained by the relevant Faculty Office according to the University's data retention policy. An allegation that is upheld should be notified to the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning for noting at Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

The student can waive the interview with the School panel and have the matter referred to the University Disciplinary Committee. The matter must be referred to the University Disciplinary Committee if the student retains legal representation, for example a solicitor.

3.2 Referral to University Disciplinary Committee



Depending on their severity, some cases of alleged academic misconduct may be referred directly to University Disciplinary Committee. Notification of such action must be sent to the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning for noting at Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee (notification of final outcome must also be sent by the School Academic Misconduct representative). All communication with the student will be recorded and copies retained by all relevant parties initially. If the allegation of academic misconduct is not upheld by the Disciplinary Committee all official records of the alleged offence must be destroyed/deleted. If the allegation is upheld by the Disciplinary Committee the records will be retained according to the University's data retention policy.

4. Stage 4: Classification and Sanction

There are four factors to be considered when classifying the level of severity of academic misconduct:

- Category 1 'Types of Violations': consideration of whether the case is considered as basic violations, limited plagiarism, extensive plagiarism, collusion, falsification / fabrication, fraud / impersonation, or contract cheating. A description of each of these concerns is included in **Appendix IV**.
- Category 2 'Stage': the student's current stage on their programme of study i.e. year 1, year 2, year 3 or 4 (not final), final year, Masters year 1, or Masters year 2 or beyond.
- Category 3 'Assessment Weighting': the weighting of the assessment(s) under consideration with respect to the total module mark.
- Category 4 'Prior breaches': takes into consideration if a student has had a previous case of academic misconduct upheld locally or by University Disciplinary Committee.

The Academic Misconduct Calculation Sheet (**Appendix V**) should be used to provide a score based on the considerations listed above. The score will indicate the level of academic misconduct that has occurred. This level is then mapped to sanctions that can be imposed at a local level, as outlined in the Rubric to map classifications of Academic Misconduct to Sanctions (**Appendix VI**). There are three levels of academic misconduct, these have been adopted from the NAIN Framework and amended to reflect current DCU practices:

- **Level 1: Minor Infringement**
Sanctions applied at the local level include mandatory academic integrity training, a formal reprimand, and may include a lower mark or a mark of zero being applied to the assessment component.
- **Level 2: Moderate Infringement**
Sanctions applied at the local level include mandatory academic integrity training, a formal reprimand, and may include a lower mark or grade of zero being applied to the complete assessment, and a lower mark or a zero mark for the module.
- **Level 3: Major Infringement**
Sanctions include mandatory academic integrity training and a formal reprimand. Major infringements are referred to the University Disciplinary Committee.

In any case where a student does not complete the mandatory academic integrity training their mark will be withheld.

The full implication of any penalty must be made clear to the student, including potential impact for progression and/or award.

The University Disciplinary Committee may impose higher sanctions, including suspension from



the University for a year or permanent exclusion from the University.

5. Stage 5: Recording and Reporting

5.1 Faculty Record of Sanction

Where the allegation is upheld at local level, or referred to University Disciplinary Committee, a record of the sanction must be kept at Faculty level. Notification of sanction must be sent to the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning for noting at Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. Any sanction noted at Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee should be notified to Registry, including confirmation of the level of the sanction imposed and what module it refers to. This centrally held information (level of breach and sanction imposed) will feed into the classification of any further instances of suspected academic misconduct.

5.2 Outcome of Local process

Students should be informed promptly in writing of the outcome of the local process.

A student must be informed that if they do not accept the outcome of the local process, they have the right to have the case heard from the beginning by the University Disciplinary Committee. In such cases Registry should be advised so that appropriate revisions to the centrally held flag on the student record can be made.

6. Processes in respect of postgraduate research students

Allegations of unacceptable academic or research practices such as falsification of data are dealt with under [DCU's Policy for Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct](#).

A judgement as to whether or not academic misconduct has occurred is integral to the examination of research reports submitted for formal assessment (such as at confirmation of a research student on the PhD register, and at award stage). The recommendations of the examiners, in line with Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis, reflect the outcome of this evaluation.

This procedure applies to Research students undertaking taught modules.

7. Retrospective academic misconduct

In cases where academic misconduct is alleged subsequent to the awarding of credit, DCU may invoke the Policy for the Revocation of University Awards or Credits, or the [Policy for Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct](#) and may, if the allegations are upheld and the offence serious, revoke the credits or award given.

8. Stage 6: Review of Procedure



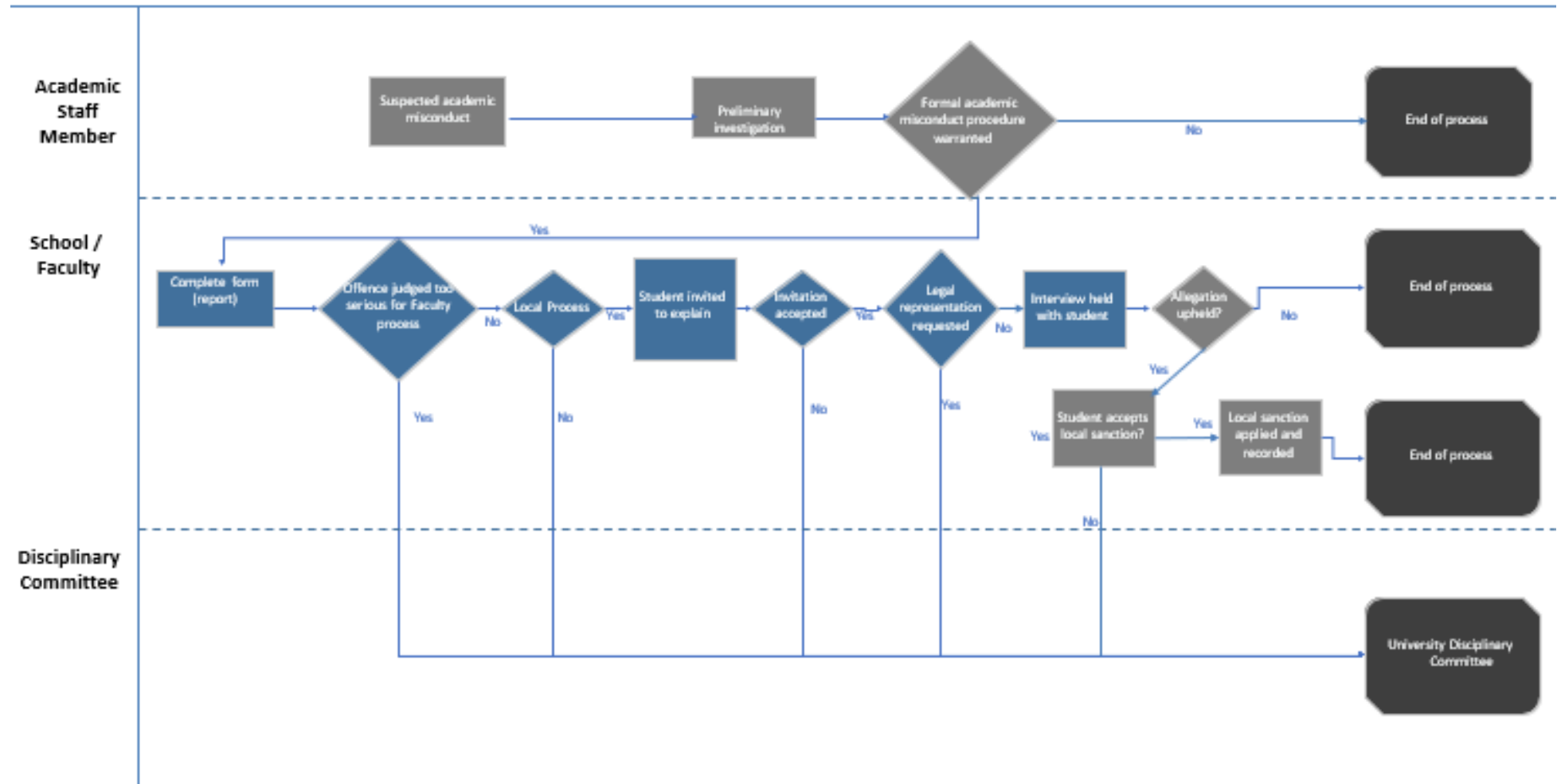
This procedure will be reviewed by University Standards Committee after the first year of operation and thereafter, every three years of operation. Any updated procedure will be referred to Academic Council for approval.

9. Appendices

- Appendix I: Flowchart outlining process for dealing with Academic Misconduct
- Appendix II: Student Declaration of Academic Integrity
- Appendix III: Template form for academic staff for reporting cases of academic misconduct
- Appendix IV: Academic Misconduct – Types of Violations
- Appendix V: Determining the Level of Academic Misconduct
- Appendix VI: DCU Rubric to Map Classifications of Academic Misconduct to Sanctions



APPENDIX I: PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT





APPENDIX II: STUDENT DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students may be required to submit work for assessment in a variety of means, for example physical submission or electronic submission as per the lecturer's instructions. **In all cases students must make a declaration of academic integrity, either by physically completing such a declaration and submitting it with their assignment or engaging appropriately with the electronic version of the declaration on Loop.** Assignments submitted such that the form has not been included, or the electronic equivalent has been circumvented, will not be accepted.

DECLARATION

NAME:	
STUDENT ID NUMBER	
PROGRAMME	
MODULE CODE	
ASSIGNMENT TITLE	
SUBMISSION DATE	

I understand that the University regards academic misconduct as grave and serious.

I have read and understood the DCU Academic Integrity [Policy](#). I accept the penalties that may be imposed should I engage in academic misconduct.

I have identified and included the source of all facts, ideas, opinions and viewpoints of others in the assignment references. Direct quotations, paraphrasing, discussion of ideas from books, journal articles, internet sources, module text, or any other source whatsoever are acknowledged and the sources cited are identified in the assignment references.

I have not made unauthorised use of artificial intelligence aids.

I declare that this material, which I now submit for assessment, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

I have used the DCU library referencing guidelines (available at <https://www.dcu.ie/library/citing-referencing> and/or the appropriate referencing system recommended in the assignment guidelines and/or programme documentation.

By signing this form or by submitting material online I confirm that this assignment, or any part of it, has not been previously submitted by me or any other person for assessment on this or any other course of study.



By signing this form or by submitting material for assessment online I confirm that I have read and understood the DCU Academic Integrity [Policy](#)

Signature _____

Date: _____



APPENDIX III: FORM FOR DCU ACADEMIC STAFF FOR REPORTING CASES OF ALLEGED ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Where a case is being referred to the University Disciplinary Committee, the form below should also be appended to the **DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE COMPLAINT FORM.**

Complete section A, B C, D and E

SECTION A:

PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING DETAILS:

STUDENT ID		DATE	
STUDENT NAME			
PROGRAMME		YEAR¹	MODULE
LECTURER/TUTOR, ETC. ²		ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT REPRESENTATIVE	

SECTION B: ALLEGED ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

INDICATE AS APPROPRIATE THE SCORE FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING FOUR CATEGORIES:

Concern 1: Types of Violation						
Basic Violations	Limited plagiarism	Extensive plagiarism	Collusion	Falsification / fabrication	Fraud / impersonation	Contract cheating
25 points	50 points	100 points	100 points	150 points	400 points	400 points

Concern 2: Stage					
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 or 4 (not final)	Final year (Undergraduate)	Masters Year 1	Masters Year 2+

¹ In the case of modular, continuous or part-time programmes, indicate in years the length of the student’s registration on the programme, e.g. first year of registration, second year of registration, to clarify the student’s academic record/experience to date.

² Usually programme chair, module co-ordinator, teaching convenor, etc. Please contact Head of School for details



25 points	50 points	100 points	150 points	170 points	200 points
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Concern 3: Assessment Weighting		
<25%	26 – 50%	51 – 100%
20 points	50 points	100 points
<u>Additional</u> points allocated in cases referring to:		
Group project: 150 points		
Final Year project: 100 points		

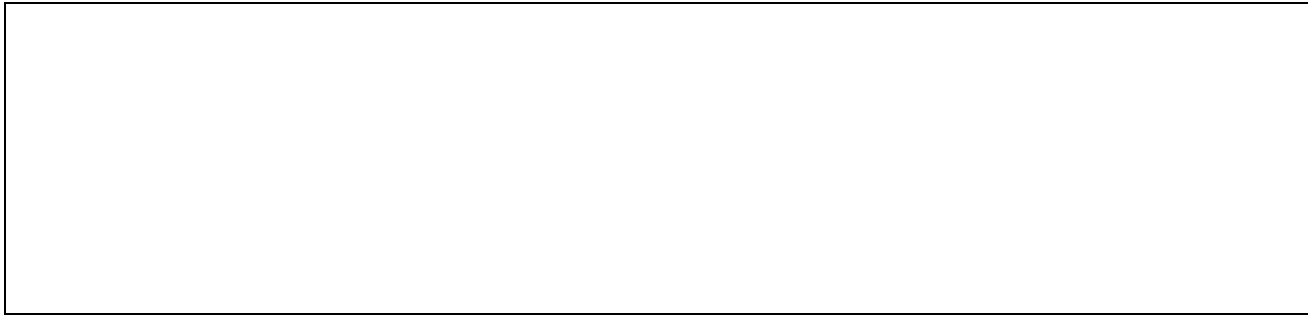
Concern 4: Prior Breaches								
None	1 prior Level 1	1 prior Level 2	1 prior Level 3	2 prior Level 1	2 prior Level 2	2 prior Level 3	3+ prior (any level)	Prior case upheld by UDC
0 points	20 points	50 points	100 points	50 points	100 points	200 points	300 points	500 points

In cases where prior breaches have not been at the same level, the higher of the two levels is taken into consideration i.e. a student with a previous L1 and L2 breach would be allocated 100 points

Total points allocated	Level of Academic Misconduct	Indicate level of Academic Misconduct
0 – 200	Level 1 Minor Infringement	
201 – 499	Level 2 Moderate Infringement	
500 +	Level 3 Major Infringement	

SECTION C:

Describe the academic misconduct involved, providing excerpts or examples as appropriate which demonstrate or represent the same.





SECTION D:

ATTACH ALL RELEVANT MATERIAL (IN THE APPROPRIATE FORMAT) RELATING TO THE ALLEGED ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

SECTION E

RECORD OF OUTCOME OF LOCAL INTERVIEW PROCEDURE



APPENDIX IV: ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT – TYPES OF VIOLATIONS

Extracted from the NAIN Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management and modified to take account of current DCU practices.

Basic Violations

Include, but are not limited to, submitting a limited portion of the same material more than once without prior authorisation; giving your own academic work to others even when doing so was not explicitly prohibited; violation of instructor policies if behaviour not listed elsewhere in the guidelines.

Limited Plagiarism

Limited plagiarism refers to cases where the plagiarised content is not a critical aspect of the assignment. It may include, but is not limited to:

- presenting work / ideas taken from other sources without proper acknowledgement
- Paraphrasing from sources without attribution; verbatim copying from sources without attribution, when what was copied was not a critical aspect of the assessment
- looking online for a solution to an assessment and copying part of that solution/answer
- Limited amounts of self-plagiarism.

Extensive Plagiarism

Extensive plagiarism includes cases where the plagiarised content is a critical aspect of the assessment. It includes, but is not limited to:

- plagiarism when the aspects copied are critical aspects of the assessment; this may include
 - cut and paste without use of quotations and citations
 - paraphrasing without appropriate citations
 - Mosaic copying where an unoriginal piece of writing composed of acknowledged or unacknowledged extracts from several different sources
 - Scaffolding where the key points and structure of another person's work have been used as a scaffold (framework) for the student's own work, without acknowledging the source.
- extensively copying from another learner's assessment without acknowledgment of their contribution;
- limited or extensive plagiarism that includes false citations
- Self-plagiarism impacting on key aspects of the assessment.

Collusion

Undisclosed collaboration between two or more people on an assessment or task, which was supposed to be completed individually when clear information was provided to students. Collusion includes inappropriate or unauthorised collaboration by two or more people in the production and submission of assessment task; learners providing their work to another learner before the submission deadline, or for the purpose of the other learner's plagiarism at any time. Allowing another (e.g., friend / relative / peer / tutor) to write / translate / significantly edit one's assessment without acknowledging that help.

Falsification / Fabrication

Includes, but is not limited to:

- altering a graded assessment provided by another person and submitting for re-grade
- fabricating data for a lab or research assessment
- submitting data you didn't yourself collect
- lying/giving a false excuse to miss or receive unfair accommodation on an assessment



- Forging educational, research or scholarship content, images, data, equipment or processes so that they are inaccurately represented.

Fraud / Impersonation

Actions that are intended to deceive for unfair advantage by violating academic regulations. Using intentional deception to gain academic credit. Fraud includes some of the most egregious violations – e.g. stealing or fraudulently obtaining answers to an assessment question /exam before submitting the assessment for grading; changing/helping to change any recorded assessment or course grade on an instructor's or university record; illicitly obtaining an assessment completed by another (without their knowledge) and submitting it (in part or whole) as one's own; submitting fake or false documents (e.g. medical notes).

Contract Cheating

Form of academic misconduct when a person uses an undeclared and/or unauthorised third party, online or directly, to assist them to produce work for academic credit or progression, whether or not payment or other favour is involved. If the provider is also a student, both students are in violation.

APPENDIX V: DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The level of academic misconduct is calculated by scoring four categories: C1 Types of Violations (see Appendix III), C2 Stage, C3 Assessment Weighting, and C4 Prior Breaches. For each of the categories, points are allocated based on the tables below. An overall score is achieved by adding together the individual points.

The overall score determines what level of infringement has occurred as follows:

Level 1 Minor Infringement: Overall score between 0 and 200

Level 2 Moderate Infringement: Overall score between 201 and 499

Level 3 Major Infringement: Overall score 500 and higher

As per Appendix VI this will determine the penalties that may be imposed at a local level if a case is upheld.

C1 Types of Violations	
Basic violations	25
Limited plagiarism	50
Extensive plagiarism	100
Collusion	100
Falsification / fabrication	150
Fraud / impersonation	500
Contract cheating	400

C3 Assessment weighting	
< 25%	20
26 - 50%	50
51 - 100%	100
Additional points allocated in cases referring to:	
Group project	150
Final year project	100

*See Appendix IV

C2 Stage	
Year 1	25
Year 2	50
Year 3 or 4 (not final)	100
Final Year (Undergraduate)	150
Masters year 1	170
Masters year 2+	200

C4 Prior breaches	
None	0
1 prior - L1	20
1 prior - L2	50
1 prior - L3	100
2 prior - L1	50
2 prior - L2	100
2 prior - L3	200
3+ prior (any)	300
Prior UDC upheld	500
<i>In cases where prior breaches have not been at the same level, the higher of the two levels is taken into consideration i.e. a student with a previous L1 and L2 breach would be allocated 100 points</i>	


APPENDIX VI: DCU RUBRIC TO MAP CLASSIFICATIONS OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT TO SANCTIONS

DCU Rubric to Map Classifications of Academic Misconduct to Sanctions	
Level 1 Minor Infringement	Disciplinary Actions
	<p>1. Mandatory academic integrity training , 2. Reprimand - a formally recorded warning kept on the learners record for the duration of their enrolment on the programme of study , AND the following sanction may be applied: a) A lower mark or a mark of zero for the assignment.</p>
Level 2 Moderate Infringement	Disciplinary Actions
	<p>1. Mandatory academic integrity training , 2. Reprimand - a formally recorded warning kept on the learners record for the duration of their enrolment on the programme of study , AND one or more of the following sanctions may be applied: a) A lower mark or a mark of zero for the continuous assessment element of the module. b) A lower mark or a mark of zero for the module.</p>
Level 3 Major Infringement	Disciplinary Actions
	<p>1. Mandatory academic integrity training , 2. Reprimand - a formally recorded warning kept on the learners record for the duration of their enrolment on the programme of study , AND the following sanction is applied: a) Referral to University Disciplinary Committee.</p>

10. References

NAIN (2023), Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), August 2023 (1st edition)
<https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2023-09/NAIN%20Framework%20for%20%20Academic%20Misconduct%20Investigation%20and%20Case%20Management%202023.pdf>



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