

Academic Honesty and Misconduct Policy and Procedure

1 Purpose and scope

The policy provides a framework for upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, honesty, and course quality, and for detecting and managing academic misconduct at AIE Institute.

This policy applies to all members of AIE Institute's higher education community.

2 Objectives

This policy outlines:

- a. Strategies to promote academic honesty
- b. Mechanisms to detect plagiarism and cheating
- c. Processes for academic misconduct.

AIE Institute is committed to ensuring that academic honesty is integral to the values of AIE Institute, and that it produces ethical graduates. AIE Institute expects all staff and students to act with integrity and honesty when developing, creating and using information and ideas, and to conduct themselves with the highest ethical standards in all aspects of academic work. In particular, AIE Institute expects that:

- d. Staff and students ensure that their academic work is their own original work
- e. The ideas of others are acknowledged appropriately
- f. All staff and students are responsible for identifying and reporting academic misconduct.

3 Implementation

The Academic Board ensures that mechanisms are in place to safeguard the reputation of AIE Institute, its staff and graduates. AIE Institute is vigilant in maintaining academic integrity and aims to eliminate plagiarism and cheating. All members of staff are responsible for implementing this policy and senior members of staff are also responsible for monitoring academic misconduct. AIE Institute:

- a. Expects all staff and students to be responsible for academic integrity and to undertake all academic work honestly
- b. Promotes academic honesty by distributing policies and information to AIE Institute's higher education community
- c. Encourages students to engage in ethical learning and scholarship practices
- d. Promotes and encourages academic literacy and integrity
- e. Ensures assessments are designed to prevent plagiarism and cheating
- f. Provides information and support to students at orientation and throughout their study
- g. Provides staff with training and development on how to identify contract cheating
- h. Monitors academic work and apply fair processes to deal with academic misconduct, including plagiarism and cheating
- i. Maintains records of allegations of misconduct and breaches of academic or research integrity on relevant staff and student files and an Academic Misconduct Register.

4 Procedure

4.1 Academic integrity for students

AIE Institute uses text matching software or employs other means to detect plagiarism, where appropriate. Academic staff are vigilant in detecting plagiarism, and use professional judgement and fair and transparent processes to determine where plagiarism has occurred, and if it is intentional or unintentional.

Students are provided with written advice during enrolment that mechanisms, including software, may be used to detect plagiarism and cheating. Students are required to acknowledge their awareness of these practices. Students are responsible for:

- a. Understanding academic honesty and misconduct and avoiding unethical practices
- b. Ensuring that their academic work is their own, and for appropriately acknowledging the work and ideas of others.

4.2 Submitting assignments

Students, when submitting assignments or any other piece of work for assessment:

- a. Must declare that the work is their own work, or the work of the group
- b. Acknowledge that student disciplinary processes may be enacted in cases of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating.

All student assessment cover sheets contain the following wording:

Academic work submitted may be subjected to plagiarism detection mechanisms. Copies of students' work may be retained for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in the future.

4.2.1 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the reproduction of someone else's words, ideas or findings and presenting them as one's own ideas without proper acknowledgement, including:

- a. Direct copying or paraphrasing from someone else's published work (either electronic or hard copy) without acknowledging the source (or authors)
- b. Using facts, information and ideas derived from a source without acknowledgement
- c. Assisting another person to commit an act of plagiarism
- d. Submitting a paper to be graded or reviewed that has been written by another person
- e. Purchasing a paper from someone else or from a commercial entity such as from the internet or other similar commercial service
- f. Copying answers or text from another classmate and submitting it as one's own
- g. Citing data without crediting the original source
- h. 'Reworking' data from another source (such as another student's research data) without acknowledgement or to pass it off as one's own work
- i. Proposing another author's idea as if it were one's own
- j. Submitting someone else's presentation, program, spreadsheet, or other file with no alterations or only minor alterations.

4.2.2 Cheating

Cheating in general can be defined as acting dishonestly or unfairly in order to gain an advantage.

Cheating in examinations or tests includes:

- a. Copying or attempting to copy from another student (or external party)
- b. Attempting to use unauthorised material either in written or electronic format

- c. Verbally communicating with another student or attempting to communicate with another student, fabricating information, data, research or other elements.

Contract cheating occurs when students employ or use a third party to undertake their assessed work for them. Examples of third parties are:

- d. Essay writing services
- e. Friends, family or other students
- f. Private tutors
- g. Copyediting services
- h. Agency websites
- i. 'Reverse classifieds' (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016, p. 639).

Other forms of cheating can be categorised as falsifying information, such as:

- j. Fabricating references or using incorrect references
- k. Falsifying lab or experimental data or observations.

4.2.2.1 *Intentional and unintentional plagiarism or cheating*

The seriousness of the misconduct is partly determined by whether the conduct is regarded as intentional or unintentional. *Intentional plagiarism* or cheating is carried out knowingly with an intent to deceive and is therefore considered as serious misconduct. *Unintentional plagiarism* may occur due to lack of familiarity with academic writing practices and is therefore considered to be less serious on the first occurrence.

4.2.3 Levels and penalties for student academic misconduct

There are varying levels of student misconduct. It is acknowledged that students studying higher education for the first time may make small errors as part of their academic learning process. The following factors, levels and penalties are provided to guide the procedures for assessing student academic misconduct.

4.2.3.1 *Factors*

Academic staff consider relevant factors to determine the level of misconduct and the seriousness of the academic misconduct, such as:

- a. The knowledge and experience of the student
- b. The type of misconduct
- c. Whether the misconduct was intentional or unintentional
- d. Whether the misconduct has occurred before.

4.2.3.2 *Level of misconduct*

The level of academic misconduct has been divided into three categories to assist with determining the appropriate penalty.

4.2.3.2.1 *Level 1 – minor*

The conduct is assessed as being unintentional and due to lack of knowledge or experience. Examples include plagiarism of less than 10 per cent due to poor referencing and using paraphrasing that is too close to the original; copying of a few sentences without referencing.

4.2.3.2.2 *Level 2 – moderate*

The conduct is assessed as being possibly unintentional or intentional; the student should have sufficient knowledge and experience to understand academic misconduct, but only constitutes a moderate breach rather than a major breach. Examples include moderate plagiarism of between 10-20%, other than a thesis; fabricating or falsifying data in an assessment other than a thesis; colluding with other students and submitting work as individual work, other than group work that has been stated as acceptable.

4.2.3.2.3 Level 3 – major

The conduct is assessed as being intentional and constitutes a serious and substantial breach. Examples include contract cheating; cheating in examinations; major plagiarism of more than 20%, particularly in a thesis; fabricating or falsifying data in a thesis.

4.2.3.3 Penalties

Penalties should consider the level of academic misconduct and the factors. In particular, the experience of the student and whether academic misconduct has occurred before should be considered.

The decision-makers for academic misconduct are:

- a. Level 1 – Course Coordinator (in conjunction with lecturer)
- b. Level 2 – Academic Director
- c. Level 3 – Academic Board.

The available penalties may include one or more of the following:

- d. A student warning
- e. Requirement for the student to undertake learning support or counselling
- f. Resubmission of the assessment item or undertaking supplementary assessment, with maximum achievement of a pass grade
- g. Requirement to undertake another form of examination, which has improved integrity
- h. Reduction in the marks allocated to the relevant assessment component consistent with the level of academic misconduct
- i. A mark of zero allocated to the assessment item
- j. A fail grade applied to the unit, with the option to re-enrol at a future date
- k. Exclusion from the course with an option to re-enrol at a future date
- l. Withdrawal of a conferred award.

4.2.4 Procedures for student academic misconduct

The following procedure will be undertaken:

- a. Where academic misconduct is suspected or identified, academic staff such as the lecturer or examiner first determines the level of misconduct, together with any evidence, such as the relevant assignment
- b. Academic staff should refer the matter to the Course Coordinator, who should decide to either take remedial action or to further refer this matter to the Academic Director within 7 working days
- c. The student's record will be checked to determine if there have been any other instances of academic misconduct recorded; multiple instances may cause the penalty to be escalated to a higher level
- d. The decision-maker conducts an initial investigation of the allegation
- e. The student is invited via email to attend a meeting with the Academic Director to discuss the issue, and may bring a support person; the notice will advise the student to respond in writing to the allegation within 14 working days
- f. The Academic Director receives a copy of all correspondence regarding the alleged academic misconduct
- g. If the student does not respond within the 14-day timeframe, the decision-maker determines whether a penalty will be imposed, defines the penalty, and decides if any support mechanisms are required
- h. If academic misconduct is determined to have occurred, supported by the evidence collected, the following penalties may be applied:

- I. In the case of Level 1 minor academic misconduct, the student may simply be issued with a warning and/or some marks may be deducted for the assessment in question
- II. In the case of Level 2 moderate academic misconduct, marks may be deducted for the assessment, or a mark of zero may be awarded for the assessment in question
- III. In the case of Level 3 major academic misconduct, a mark of zero may be awarded for the assessment and/or the whole project
- IV. In the case where multiple instances of academic misconduct have been committed by a student, the Academic Director may refer the matter to the Academic Board which has the right to expel the student; if a decision for expulsion is made, then all fees paid by the student to date will be forfeited and the student will not be allowed to continue with their course or seek a refund
 - i. A formal notice of the decision is sent to the student together with information outlining their right to appeal the decision
 - j. Copies of the notice and subsequent actions are sent to relevant administrative and academic personnel to ensure that the allegation and decision is recorded on the student's file, and assessments are adjusted accordingly, where relevant
 - k. All instances of academic misconduct, no matter how minor, are recorded on the student's file.

4.2.4.1 Reporting misconduct outcomes

The decision-maker for academic misconduct allegations will notify all staff of the outcomes to ensure that academic integrity actions are visible in AIE Institute's community.

Periodically, AIE Institute will publish de-identified data on the institution's intranet and website, available to both staff and students, outlining breaches investigated in a given period, along with associated outcomes. An Academic Integrity newsletter will also be distributed via staff and student portals as another mechanism to discourage academic misconduct.

4.3 Appeals

A student who has been assessed as having committed an act of misconduct can appeal the penalty decision in the following ways:

- a. A written appeal to the Academic Director (Level 1) or Academic Board (Level 2 or 3), dependent on the level of the academic misconduct
- b. If the first option fails, then an appeal can be made in writing to the Academic Board, and it will make a decision; or to the Board of Directors if the Academic Board made the initial decision
- c. If a student is still unhappy with the decision, they may make an appeal to an external party, such as:
 - I. A nominated academic member of staff based in a local university or in the country in which the student resides, who can mediate or arbitrate
 - II. International students may seek a review by the Overseas Student Ombudsman. The contact details for the Ombudsman are located in the Student Grievance Policy and Procedure.

Students should refer to the Student Grievance Policy and Procedure for details of the appeals process.

4.4 Academic integrity for staff

Staff are responsible for:

- a. Maintaining high ethical standards in conducting research and scholarly activities within the guidelines of the Intellectual Inquiry and Academic Freedom Policy and Procedure
- b. Promoting academic integrity and honesty amongst students

- c. Monitoring and detecting student academic misconduct
- d. Reporting academic misconduct to a senior member of academic staff.

4.4.1 Staff academic misconduct

Matters of alleged staff academic misconduct should be promptly reported to the Academic Director. If the Academic Director determines that there may be a case of academic misconduct, then the matter should be referred to the CEO, together with a report on the alleged misconduct.

4.4.1.1 Process

- a. The CEO will commence an investigation of the matter, and may appoint other persons to assist with the investigation
- b. The staff member shall be notified in writing of the allegations made against them, including any evidence; the staff member will be given 14 days to provide a response to the allegations, including the provision of evidence to counter the allegation
- c. Copies of the notice and subsequent actions are sent to relevant administrative and academic personnel to ensure that the allegation and decision is recorded on the staff file
- d. All instances of academic misconduct, no matter how minor, are recorded on the staff file
- e. The CEO will arrange for a meeting to be held between the staff member, the CEO, the Academic Director, and a member from the Academic Board; the staff member may bring a representative who is not a practising lawyer or barrister
- f. The CEO will ensure that any new information is promptly provided to all parties for consideration and response.

On completion of the investigation, the CEO will prepare a report to the Academic Board outlining the findings, evidence, conclusions and recommendations.

The Academic Board will consider the report and decide whether to:

- g. Take no further action
- h. Request further information from any of the parties
- i. Take disciplinary action.

4.5 Appeals

If the staff member is not satisfied with the decision, he/she may seek an appeal as outlined in the Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure.

5 Definitions

Academic integrity refers to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in all academic endeavours, including preparing and presenting work for assessment as part of coursework or research.

Academic literacy refers to the capacity to undertake study and research, and to communicate findings and knowledge in a manner appropriate to the particular disciplinary conventions and scholarly standards expected at a higher education level.

Academic misconduct is any activity or practice including but not limited to cheating in any assessments, plagiarism, unauthorised collusion, fraudulent or unethical research and scholarship practices.

Cheating in general can be defined as acting dishonestly or unfairly in order to gain an advantage

Contract cheating occurs when students employ or use a third party to undertake their assessed work for them.

De-identified data refers to data from which all personally identifiable information has been removed by deleting or masking personal identifiers, such as an individual's name or student ID, and suppressing or generalising quasi-identifiers, such as date of birth.

Ethical and ethics refers to the guiding values, principles and standards that enable people to determine how things should be done and how they should act. Ethics refers to the judgements that people make and the process that determines those judgements. It is the process by which people make value-based decisions which ultimately guides their actions and behaviours.

Plagiarism is using another person's ideas, designs, words or works without appropriate acknowledgement.

6 Related documents

The following policies and procedures are related to this policy:

- a. Intellectual Inquiry and Academic Freedom Policy and Procedure
- b. Staff Code of Conduct
- c. Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure
- d. Student Code of Conduct
- e. Student Grievance Policy and Procedure.

7 Review

Three years from commencement.

8 Accountabilities

The Academic Board is responsible for review and approval of this policy.

The policy is to be implemented via induction and training of staff and distribution to students and AIE Institute's higher education community via the website and other publications.

Acknowledgement is accorded to the University of Western Australia in the development of the levels and penalties of student academic misconduct, and definitions in this policy.