

Academic Misconduct Policy

The College regards Academic Misconduct as a serious academic offence. Details of the policy are shown in the policy relating to Academic Misconduct.

1.1.1 Procedure for Dealing with Cases of Plagiarism

Incidents of alleged or suspected plagiarism should be reported to the relevant Programme Lead in writing. A meeting with the academic member of staff, the learner concerned, and the Programme Lead takes place where the learner is given the chance to explain.

If, in the judgement of the Programme Lead, a satisfactory explanation has been given, caution and further guidance/advice on plagiarism can be given to the student. If no satisfactory explanation is given, then the plagiarism disciplinary procedures are commenced.

Poor academic practice is handled at faculty level. It may arise from a lack of understanding of academic protocols or a misunderstanding of expected academic conventions of the discipline. However, a *prima facie* case for **academic misconduct** exists if:

1. There is any indication that the learner intended to gain an unfair advantage or had the intention to deceive the examiner.
2. The learner had already been found guilty of a similar offence of poor academic practice and could therefore be reasonably expected to have familiarised themselves with the academic practice of the discipline.

In all cases where poor academic practice or academic misconduct is found the learner must undergo training in good academic practice, including information literacy classes.

Where plagiarism or collusion is suspected the examiner must mark the work and then present a case for an investigation of academic misconduct. The case may include reference to plagiarism detection software, but it should be noted that whilst such software supports the detection of plagiarism, it does not prove it and therefore cannot be the sole reason for an allegation of academic misconduct. Where the case is supported by the Head of Faculty it is referred to the Director of Academic Programmes.

Where cheating in an examination is suspected, the invigilator records the incident in the Invigilator's Report. On completion of the examination, the issue is brought to the attention of the Director of Academic Programmes who will determine if there is a case to answer.

1.1.2 Investigation of Alleged Cases of Academic Misconduct

The Director of Academic Programmes reviews all academic misconduct cases presented and makes a judgement if there is a *prima facie* case to answer. If they determine there is a case to answer, they shall convene a meeting of the Academic Misconduct Committee. The Office of the Director of Academic Programmes informs the learner of the allegation of academic misconduct and invites them to that meeting.

The composition and membership of an Academic Misconduct Committee is set out this policy.

In judging the level of academic misconduct (minor, moderate, serious), the Academic Misconduct Committee will consider the following criteria:

1. The student's intent. If there is evidence of a deliberate attempt to deceive, to disguise plagiarism, this is considered very serious.
2. History of academic misconduct, i.e. more serious for a repeated offence.
3. The extent of the plagiarism, i.e. considerable textual plagiarism or plagiarism of critical ideas is considered serious.
4. The level of academic study, i.e. plagiarism by a learner on a level 8 programme is considered more serious than a learner on level 6.
5. Location of the plagiarism. More serious in the core part of the assessment / argument/ conclusions, less so in the background or appendix.
6. Time the learner has spent studying at the College.

The learner involved in the alleged academic misconduct incident may, if they wish, have another learner enrolled at the College accompany them to this meeting.

Each case will be considered individually, taking into account the particular circumstances. The aim is always to educate the learner on the seriousness of this offence and prevent it happening in the future.

The Committee reviews the case and the evidence, interviews the learner, and determines an outcome.

Possible outcomes include:

1. There is no case to answer
2. Poor academic practice is found
3. Academic misconduct is found
4. Serious academic misconduct is found.

The outcome is recorded on the learner record unless there is some mitigating factor determined by the Academic Misconduct Committee. Where a case is not found, no record is kept.

In the case of poor academic practice, it is advised that learners are directed to take information literacy classes.

Possible penalties for **minor or moderate academic misconduct** may include:

1. Caution and guidance / advice on plagiarism;
2. Require resubmission of assessment with no penalty;
3. Require resubmission of assessment with mark capped at 40% marks penalty for that assessment.

Penalties for any minor and moderate academic misconduct are retained on the learner record for the duration of the programme.

Students who are assigned either of the first two penalties listed above shall have details of the breach excised from their learner record on completion of their programme.

Possible penalties for **serious academic misconduct** may include:

Resubmission of the work as a second attempt with a capped mark.

Resit an examination for a capped mark.

Resit all examinations in a series for capped mark.

Suspension.

Expulsion.

Where a case of serious Academic Misconduct is found, it should be recorded on the learner's permanent record.

Where the outcome of an Academic Misconduct Committee meeting is pending at the Examination Board, the broadsheet should reflect 'Pending' against the learner status.

The Director of Academic Programmes will report annually to Academic Council on the number of Plagiarism cases and the penalties applied.

1.1.3 Appeals

Appeals against the decision of an Academic Misconduct Committee are heard by an Appeal Board, established in accordance with the provisions of Policy for Appeals.

1.2 Plagiarism Detection Software

Text-matching software is commonly used as a screening tool for work submitted for assessment, and it may also be used as an educational tool. The software can be used:

- Formatively, to facilitate discussion about good academic practice, correct citation techniques and identify learners in need of extra support at an early stage;
- As a deterrent to plagiarism; and
- As a detection tool.

The College recognises that there is a clear distinction between the academic and disciplinary aspects of using these tools. In alignment with the principles of fairness, consistency and transparency in assessment, the College applies such software as a matter of course to all assignments. Information about plagiarism and good academic practice is introduced in induction material and classroom activities.

It is the responsibility of the Programme Lead to ensure all learners understand that on submission of their assignments the software is used to assist the detection of plagiarism. In line with the Data Protection Policy, no personal information may be included in the submission, and learner numbers and module codes are used to identify learners.

The College recognises the limitations of using plagiarism detection software, for example:

- The software may be limited in detecting matches to sources not available on the internet, or search password-protected essay banks
- Failure to detect work which is copied by translation from a non-English source.
- Failure to detect matching images, including graphs and mathematical equations inserted as images etc.

In many cases the software highlights correctly cited references or innocent matches.

Therefore, examiners must carefully review originality reports to assess whether the work does contain plagiarism; the software does not obviate the need for careful checking of the report to distinguish between innocent matches and plagiarism.

Where plagiarism is suspected the assessor may, as matter of judgement, invoke the Academic Misconduct procedures.

The assessor will determine the extent of the learner's contribution and award marks appropriately. This may result in a lower mark than may otherwise have been the case.

However, no marks may be deducted. Marks may only be deducted as an outcome of an Academic Misconduct Committee.

1.3 Awards and Conferring

1.3.1 Awards and Parchments

Awards are determined at meetings of an Examination Board.

The examination broadsheet is signed by the Examination Board and retained by The College. Final results are submitted to QQI, in the case of QQI submitted to the QBS system, then awards may be made. QQI may have an observer at the Examination Board; the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar is responsible for sending QQI a schedule of Examination Board dates annually.

Parchments are prepared by QQI and issued at a conferring ceremony arranged and managed by the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar.

1.3.2 Conferring Protocols

The conferring protocol is informed by the relevant awarding body. The wording for the awards is subject to approval by QQI and is signed off annually. Robes and hoods comply with QQI guidelines which advise on the colour of gowns, epitogues, hoods and caps to be worn.

1.3.3 European Diploma Supplement

On successful completion of their studies, learners are entitled to receive a Diploma Supplement. The Diploma Supplement facilitates the academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.).

This Diploma Supplement follows the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international 'transparency' and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.).

The Diploma Supplement provides additional information regarding the learner's award which is not available on QQI parchments such as the skills and competencies acquired and entry requirements and access opportunities to the next stage of education.

It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should be given as to the reason why. This is provided by the Director of Academic Affairs and Registrar' office.