

2. Development of RCSI's Academic Integrity Policy

Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

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Introduction

In 2019, the increased recognition of the need to promote and maintain academic integrity led QQI to establish a National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN), of which RCSI is a member. NAIN is a peer-driven network to enable the fostering of a national understanding of academic integrity and what it means in the higher education context. The RCSI Quality Committee established an Academic Integrity Working Group (AIWG), in 2020, as a formal structure to monitor and respond to initiatives launched by the NAIN and QQI around Academic Integrity. Representative of staff and students, the AIWG aims to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of academic integrity. Prior to 2020, RCSI had a plagiarism policy which specifically addressed plagiarism as an aspect of academic integrity. The AIWG agreed that its first priority would be an expanded policy that set out the University's understanding of what is meant by academic integrity, and what constitutes academic misconduct.

1. Honesty

2. Trust

3. Fairness

4. Respect

5. Responsibility

6. Courage

The six fundamental values for academic integrity as identified by the International Centre for Academic Integrity (2021)

Initiative

A sub-group of the AIWG, consisting of the AIWG Convenor, school representatives and the Head of Registry Services, was tasked with developing the policy. A review of both published and grey literature, in addition to draft NAIN guidelines, was undertaken to inform its content. It was determined that the policy should include a definition of academic integrity, a statement of its principles, a definition and description of academic misconduct, a statement of student responsibilities and a procedure for addressing suspected incidences of academic misconduct. As RCSI acknowledges that not all suspected incidences of academic misconduct are equal in severity, it was determined that the policy should incorporate an approach to suspected academic misconduct based on three response levels. A description of each response level and the associated course of action was also required. A draft policy was prepared for review and consideration by the wider AIWG, which includes undergraduate and postgraduate student representatives. This clearly articulated students' responsibilities as they relate to academic integrity and detailed the consequences of failing to meeting these responsibilities. The draft policy was then reviewed for alignment with existing regulations. It was identified that amendments to the Examination and Assessment Regulations and Disciplinary Regulations were also required.

The draft Academic Integrity policy together with aligned amendments to RCSI's Examination and Assessment Regulations and Disciplinary Regulations were approved by the AIWG in April 2021, in advance of presentation to Academic Council and MHSB for approval in May 2021. The policy was published in the Student Policies, Procedures and Regulations page in the Moodle VLE, so that it is readily accessible to students and staff.

Outcome

The establishment of the AIWG has been a critical driver of cross-institutional collaboration to support academic integrity. The combined expertise of both academic and professional services staff was critical to the development of a policy which reflects the requirements of multiple stakeholders and contexts. The new Academic Integrity policy was introduced in advance of the 2021/22 academic session.

Further related enhancements were identified because of this initial project. The Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Codes of Conduct were also updated to reference Academic Integrity in advance of the 2022/23 academic session. It also was agreed, that following the introduction of the Academic Integrity policy, there was a need to review how academic integrity should be imparted to undergraduate and postgraduate students across the University together. Therefore, the next project undertaken by the AIWG was development of an enhanced online resource, in collaboration with the Head of Online Education and members of the Digital Education Design team. This course was launched in advance of the 2022/23 academic session and provides additional support to students to ensure that the required standards of academic integrity are upheld. For university staff, the introduction of both the policy and the online resource provides them with the tools needed to lead and guide their students to demonstrate academic integrity in the pursuit of their studies.