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Academic Integrity Policy

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE

Policy/Regulation History

Document Title					
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1.1	Approved	Academic Integrity Sub-Working Group	Academic Integrity Working Group	MHSB	27 th May 2021
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1 Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to set out RCSI's arrangements and supports for enabling students* to understand and value academic integrity; and to provide a framework for effective, fair, consistent, and timely processes in the event of an allegation of academic misconduct being made against a student. The policy includes the pathways for investigating an allegation of academic misconduct against a student, at School and University level.ⁱ

(*refers to both undergraduate students and postgraduate scholars and the term "student(s)" in this policy applies to either category of student as appropriate)

This policy, and any associated procedures, apply to all work submitted for assessment by all students registered to RCSI, on all taught and research programmes.

2 Academic Integrity Statement

RCSI, as a health sciences university, espouses the highest standards of professionalism among its students both at undergraduate and postgraduate level – the showing of respect for the work of others and acting with honesty and responsibility in preparing and submitting coursework and completing examinations are key components of professionalism and underpin all academic activities.

Academic integrity is defined as "*the commitment to and demonstration of honest and moral behaviour in an academic setting by the enrolled learner*".ⁱⁱ

It involves compliance by all RCSI enrolled undergraduate and postgraduate students with ethical and professional principles, standards, practices and a consistent system of values, that serves as guidance for making decisions and taking actions in education, research and scholarship.ⁱⁱⁱ

The six fundamental values for academic integrity as identified by the International Centre for Academic Integrity (2021) are honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage.^{iv}

Responsibility for demonstrating academic integrity lies with the enrolled learner, and this includes: "*compliance with ethical and professional principles, standards and practices and consistent system of values, that serves as guidance for making decisions and taking actions in education, research and scholarship*".^v

Academic integrity is relevant to all areas of academic endeavour undertaken by the enrolled learner. This includes, but is not limited to, all activities related to the achievement of academic credit for awards; all methods of learning practice including in the classroom, research, online, distance and work-based learning; in all methods and forms of assessment including examinations and various forms of continuous assessment and in academic scholarship.

3 Academic Misconduct

Any behaviour or action which contravenes academic integrity and breaches its fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage is considered to constitute Academic Misconduct. Academic misconduct is any attempt to seek unfair advantage in relation to any academic activity including through unauthorised content generation. Unauthorised content generation is "*the production of academic work, in whole or in part, for academic credit, progression or award, whether or not a payment or other favour is involved, using unapproved or undeclared human or technological assistance*".^{vi} Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to:



RCSI

- Plagiarism
- Cheating in any forum or form
- Misrepresentation of research (e.g. data falsification and fabrication of data)
- Contract cheating
- Copy-editing
- Purchase or any unauthorised procurement of examination material
- Breaches of the Examinations and Assessment Regulations
- Impersonation
- Unauthorised use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI)
- Any other act which dishonestly uses information to gain academic credit.

3.1 Plagiarism

The unacknowledged inclusion, whether intentional or unintentional in any form of assessment for a programme of study of material without due acknowledgement of its original source.

It may include but is not limited to the following:^{vii}

- Presenting in your own name, work authored by a third party, such as other students, friends or family (with or without permission), or work purchased through any source or given to you by a third party^{viii}, including organisations such as essay mills. The original source may be in written form or in any other media (for example, audio or video);
- Presenting ideas, theories, concepts, methodologies or data (including research data) from the work of another without due acknowledgement;
- Presenting text, digital work (e.g. computer code or programs), video recordings or images copied with only minor changes from sources such as the internet, the output of GenAI, books, journals or any other media, without due acknowledgement;
- Paraphrasing (i.e. putting a passage or idea from another source into your own words), without due acknowledgement of the source;
- Failing to include appropriate citation of all original sources;
- Representing collaborative work as solely your own;
- Presenting work for an assignment which has also been submitted (in part or whole) for another assignment at RCSI or another institution (i.e. self-plagiarism).

3.2 Falsification^x

The presenting or making use of fictitious, altered or misrepresented data, evidence, references, citations or experimental results. It also covers documents submitted or used when seeking accommodations, including through Exceptional Circumstances, Appeals or other university procedures, or any other information that could be used to gain an unfair academic advantage.

3.3 Contract Cheating

Contract cheating is a 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.^x Contract cheating services include ghostwriting and essay mills.



RCSI

3.4 Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)

Artificial Intelligence refers to systems that appear to have “intelligent behaviour by analysing their environment and taking actions – with some degree of autonomy- to achieve specific goals”.^{xi}

Gen AI tools automatically generate content in response to prompts written in natural-language conversational interfaces and can be used to transform, produce or generate any kind of content such as text, images, art, music or programming code. Different technologies, including machine learning and neural networks, are used to develop the capabilities of these tools.^{xii, xiii}

4 Academic Integrity and Student Responsibilities

The purpose of assessment, both formative and summative, is to support learning, ascertain learner understanding and demonstrate the achievement of specific learning outcomes by that learner. It is the responsibility of the enrolled learner to ensure that all submitted work for assessment purposes in an academic setting, which includes but is not limited to text, graphics, tables, formulae, results or any representation of ideas in print, electronic or any other media, in addition to artefacts, computer software and algorithms, does not constitute unauthorised content generation and correctly acknowledges the source of any data which is not original to the learner.^{xiv}

In the completion of any work submitted for assessment the learner is responsible for critiquing its output in terms of logic, consistency, accuracy and bias. This includes where GenAI is used as authorised.

All students must be willing to sign a declaration that the work they are submitting is their own; that there is no unauthorised content generation, no unacknowledged use of another person’s work; and that the work has not been previously submitted by the student or anyone else.

Students must not mislead an examiner by submitting work that suggests that the information gathered and analysed was their own when this was not the case.

Students need to be aware that legislation pertains in Ireland which allows students to be prosecuted for breaches of academic integrity, specifically the provision or advertising of cheating services. Section 43A of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 as amended specifically empowers the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) agency to prosecute those who facilitate academic cheating. The provisions cover: impersonation; provision of or advertising of cheating services and the publishing of advertisement for cheating. QQI is responsible for bringing prosecutions in respect of these offences.

The provision of the necessary support, encouragement and learning opportunities is essential if the integrity, reputation and culture of academic honesty within RCSI is to be maintained and students are to commit to and pursue their studies in accordance with the principles which underpin academic integrity. In addition to this policy, there are various supports available to students including:

- i. The RCSI Examination & Assessment Regulations
- ii. The RCSI Library’s guides and tutorials including those on EndNote®, Referencing and GenAI
- iii. The Marks & Standards for the programme they are completing (as appropriate)
- iv. Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Codes of Conduct
- v. Professionalism In the Health Sciences module (Foundation year medicine and physiotherapy)
- vi. RCSI online Academic Integrity resource
- vii. Any individual statement(s) or resources introduced locally by a School/Academic Unit to support its students to demonstrate academic integrity and avoid academic misconduct.



RCSI

If a student is in doubt as to what constitutes academic integrity, they are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from a member of the academic staff.

The RCSI Academic Council requires all students to successfully complete the RCSI online Academic Integrity resource on at least one occasion while completing their studies. Individual Schools/Academic Units may mandate their students to successfully complete the resource on more than one occasion.

It is important to acknowledge that not all suspected incidences of academic misconduct are intentional. RCSI acknowledges that students are learners of varying abilities and the skills of appropriate scholarly research and referencing require time to learn. It is further acknowledged that some students come from different educational cultures with varying perceptions and accepted styles of referencing and acknowledging original work. These students may require time to learn what is required to demonstrate academic integrity as it applies to higher education in Ireland.

Notwithstanding the various resources available, some students at the commencement of their educational journey at RCSI may unintentionally fail to fulfil the required standards of academic integrity. Where it becomes apparent that students in the early stages of their programme of studies or research are not learning as expected, a supportive approach to addressing their shortcomings with regard to demonstrating academic integrity will be adopted by the University.

5 Suspected Incidences of Academic Misconduct

Any behaviour or action which contravenes academic integrity (including that which constitutes unauthorised content generation) and breaches its fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage, is considered to constitute Academic Misconduct.

RCSI reserves the right to avail of any technological or other means available to it to detect academic misconduct in respect of any assessment or other academic activity undertaken by any of its students.

Where a suspected incidence of academic misconduct occurs during an examination, it will be addressed in accordance with the University's Examinations & Assessment Regulations. Suspected incidences of academic misconduct by any student other than in an examination setting will in the first instance be investigated in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

Where a suspected incidence of academic misconduct comes to the attention of any member of the University's staff, they are required to bring that to the attention of the relevant authority such as Programme Director, Cycle Director, Year Lead or equivalent in the School or Academic Unit in which the student is enrolled. Following an assessment of the suspected breach by the appropriate subject matter expert(s), the relevant School or academic unit will classify the response level (Level 1, 2 or 3) for the suspected breach in accordance with the criteria provided for in Table 1 below.

The classification of response level identified on a case-by-case basis will determine the further course of action to be pursued in respect of the suspected breach. The determination of the relevant response level will be made under the supervision of the relevant Programme Director, Cycle Director, Year Lead or equivalent in consultation with the Head of School or Academic Unit as appropriate.



To guide the classification of response level in accordance with Table 1, a breach of academic integrity associated with academic misconduct of a serious nature involves any behavior or activity, which would likely have the effect of more than marginally enhancing the grade or outcome awarded to the student as part of any associated assessment process. The advice of RCSI Registry may be sought by the relevant School/Academic Unit in its determination of the appropriate response level in any individual case.

When adjudicating upon any suspected incidence of academic misconduct, it is sufficient to establish that academic misconduct has occurred based on ‘the balance of probabilities’ standard of proof rather than ‘beyond all reasonable doubt’.”^{xv}

Any determination made in accordance with the provisions of this policy may be reviewed in accordance with the appeal provisions of the University’s Disciplinary Regulations.

Table 1 Response Levels to Academic Misconduct

Response Level	Description	Associated Course of Action
Level 1: Poor academic practice/conduct	Unintentional breach of Academic Integrity resulting in academic misconduct considered to be of a less serious nature: first occasion. Examples include, but are not limited to poor referencing, limited plagiarism etc.	Academic Integrity retraining. Support the student in addressing the deficiencies in their knowledge, understanding and awareness of what is required to demonstrate Academic Integrity and avoiding committing further acts of academic misconduct. A Level 1 response does not normally incur sanctions such as penalties in respect of the grade awarded but this is at the discretion of the School/Academic Unit on a case-by-case basis. The School/Academic Unit will advise Registry for noting the details of each incidence where a Level 1 response is applied to an individual student.
Level 2: Academic misconduct (minor infringement)	Breach of Academic Integrity resulting in academic misconduct considered to be of a less serious nature: first occasion OR Breach of Academic Integrity resulting in academic misconduct considered to be of a less serious nature where a Level 1 response has previously been applied to that student.	Academic Integrity retraining. The School/Academic Unit to determine the sanction to be applied and the corrective action to be undertaken by the student within a specified timeframe, including any penalty in respect of grade awarded. Where a Level 2 response is applied to a student, the School/Academic Unit will advise Registry of the relevant details for formal recording in the individual student’s record.



RCSI

<p>Level 3: Severe academic misconduct (major infringement)</p>	<p>Breach of Academic Integrity Standards by a student resulting in academic misconduct considered to be of a serious nature OR Breach of Academic Integrity Standards resulting in academic misconduct where a Level 2 has previously been applied to the student OR Failure by a student to satisfactorily comply with an approved course of action identified under either a Level 1 or Level 2 response</p>	<p>The School/Academic Unit to refer the alleged breach of academic integrity to Registry for investigation and referral as appropriate for adjudication by a committee convened in accordance with the University's Disciplinary Regulations.</p>
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Endnotes

- ⁱ University College Dublin (UCD) *Student Plagiarism Policy*. Available at: https://sisweb.ucd.ie/usis/IW_HU_MENU.P_PUBLISH?p_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=222. Accessed 15/2/2021
- ⁱⁱ University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, The Writing Centre. <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/esl/resources/academic-integrity/> Accessed 19/03/24
- ⁱⁱⁱ ENAI (2018). European Network for Academic Integrity *Glossary for Academic Integrity*. https://www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/EN-Glossary_revised_final_24.02.23.pdf Accessed 06/02/24.
- ^{iv} International Centre for Academic Integrity (2021). *The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity (3rd edition)*. Available at https://www.academicintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/20019_ICAI-Fundamental-Values_R12.pdf. Accessed 22/02/21
- ^v Tauginienė, L, Gaižauskaitė, I, Glendinning, I, Kravjar, J, Ojsteršek, M, Ribeiro, L, Odiņeca, T, Marino, F, Cosentino, M, Sivasubramaniam, S, Foltýnek, T. Glossary for Academic Integrity. ENAI Report 3G [online]: revised version, October 2018. Accessed 20/03/24
- ^{vi} Foltýnek, T., Bjelobaba, S., Glendinning, I., Khan, Z.R., Santos, R., Pavletic, P. and Kravjar, J., 2023. ENAI Recommendations on the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence in Education. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 19(1), p.12
- ^{vii} University College Dublin (UCD) Student Plagiarism Policy. Available at https://sisweb.ucd.ie/usis/IW_HU_MENU.P_PUBLISH?p_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=222. Accessed 15/2/2021
- ^{viii} The purchasing of work from any such source is prohibited under Section 43A of the Qualifications & Quality Assurance (Education & Training) Act 2012 as amended by the Amendment Act 2019
- ^{ix} University College London (UCL). Academic Integrity- Students. Available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/exams-and-assessments/academic-integrity>. Accessed 21/2/2021
- ^x The National Academic Integrity Network (2020). Academic Integrity- National Principles & Lexicon for Academic Integrity. Quality & Qualifications Ireland
- ^{xi} European Commission (2018) Artificial Intelligence for Europe. European Commission. Brussels. 24 April, 2018. Available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=COM:2018:237:FIN>
- ^{xii} Foltýnek, T., Bjelobaba, S., Glendinning, I., Khan, Z.R., Santos, R., Pavletic, P. and Kravjar, J., 2023. ENAI Recommendations on the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence in Education. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 19(1), p.12.
- ^{xiii} Guidance for generative AI in education and research (2023). UNESCO. p8
- ^{xiv} The National Academic Integrity Network (2020). Academic Integrity- National Principles & Lexicon for Academic Integrity. Quality & Qualifications Ireland
- ^{xv} NAIN Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management. QQI. August 2023 (1st edition)