

Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure HEPP02

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to promote the principle of mutual respect by educating staff and students about standards Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education) considers appropriate; to discourage behaviour Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education) considers inappropriate; to implement fair and rigorous procedures for addressing possible cases of academic misconduct; and to provide for the enforcement of penalties in cases of academic misconduct.

SCOPE

This policy and procedure apply to all staff and students of Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education), in respect of their preparation, dissemination and submission of any form of academic and scholarly work.

DEFINITIONS

Academic Integrity	The capacity to undertake study and research and to communicate findings and knowledge, in a manner appropriate to that particular discipline's conventions and scholarly standards expected at higher education.
Academic Misconduct	The intentional or reckless conduct by which a student seeks to gain an unfair or unjustified academic advantage in a course or unit. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to the following instances: collusion, inappropriate collaboration, cheating (including contract cheating), plagiarism, misrepresenting or fabricating data or results or other assessable work, inappropriate electronic data sourcing or collection, and any other forms of dishonest academic or scholarly conduct, breaching examination rules that reduces the efficacy of the assessment process, offering or accepting bribes and using a false identity.
Ethical Scholarship	Entails the pursuit of scholarly enquiry marked by honesty. It is reflected both in individual and group approaches to study and assessment tasks, and is part of a broader institutional commitment to maintain and extend robust, defensible and transparent educational standards and practices.
SCEI-HE	Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education)

POLICY

1. SCEI-HE is committed to providing outstanding teaching and learning experiences, fostering an academic environment promoting rigorous standards of independent scholarship, critical inquiry, academic integrity, and academic freedom. All staff and students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of academic ethics and integrity.
2. Assessment design aims to minimize opportunities for misconduct through unique tasks, oral assessments, and staged submissions.
3. Penalties for academic misconduct vary according to severity and may include further work, deduction of marks, zero marks for assessment, failure of unit or course, suspension, exclusion, or non-conferral of awards.
4. All academic staff receive induction and ongoing professional development on academic integrity policies, including tools and resources for detection (e.g., plagiarism software), investigation, and fair case handling.
5. The Academic Director or delegate is responsible for approving any penalty.
6. Academic misconduct is categorised into three levels:
 - 6.1 Minor Academic Misconduct
 - 6.2 Moderate Academic Misconduct
 - 6.3 Major Academic Misconduct

HANDLING ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT – ROLES AND STEPS

Step 1: Identification

- The marker/lecturer detects possible academic misconduct during marking and documents the evidence.
- The marker reports suspected misconduct to the Unit Coordinator within 5 working days.

Step 2: Initial Classification and Action

- The Unit Coordinator reviews evidence and classifies the misconduct as Minor, Moderate, or Major according to policy definitions.
- Minor cases may be dealt with directly by the Unit Coordinator with appropriate penalties (e.g., deduction of marks, resubmission).
- Moderate and Major cases must be referred to the Academic Director for review.

Step 3: Academic Director Review

- The Academic Director reviews Moderate and Major cases, confirming classification and approving penalties or escalating Major cases to the Teaching and Learning Committee.

Step 4: Teaching and Learning Committee Review

- The Teaching and Learning Committee considers Major cases and repeat offences, applying final penalties including failure, suspension, or exclusion.

Step 5: Communication and Appeal

- Outcomes and penalties are communicated in writing to the student, including their right to appeal under Academic Appeals Policy HEPP05 within 10 working days.

PROCEDURE

SCEI-HE provides ongoing education to students on academic integrity through orientation, workshops, online modules, referencing guides, and citation tools. Resources on the LMS support diverse student cohorts, including international and non-native English speakers.

1. Academic Misconduct Categories and Penalties

1.1 Minor Academic Misconduct

- Careless or negligent breaches with limited impact on assessment integrity.
- Examples: Minor plagiarism (e.g., 1-2 sentences), inconsistent referencing.
- Penalties: Warning, requirement to resubmit, deduction of marks; handled by Unit Coordinator without referral.

1.2 Moderate Academic Misconduct

- Moderate breaches impacting academic integrity.
- Examples: Moderate plagiarism, unauthorized submission of work for multiple units, unauthorized collaboration.
- Penalties: Zero marks for affected assessment, failure of assessment task; requires referral to Academic Director.

2.3 Major Academic Misconduct

- Serious breaches involving intentional deception or reckless behaviour.
- Examples: Major plagiarism (>25%), contract cheating, exam cheating, data fabrication.
- Penalties: Failure of unit, suspension, exclusion, or non-conferral of awards; handled by Teaching and Learning Committee.

Misconduct Level	Description	Examples	Typical Penalties
Minor	Careless, limited impact	Minor plagiarism, referencing errors	Warning, resubmission, mark deduction
Moderate	Moderate breach	Moderate plagiarism, collusion	Zero marks for assessment, failure of assessment
Major	Serious, intentional misconduct	Contract cheating, exam cheating	Failure of unit, suspension, exclusion, expulsion

2. Minor Academic Misconduct

2.1 Considered minor when arising from careless practice or neglect of guidelines, with limited impact on assessment integrity.

2.2 Often related to early undergraduate work. Examples include:

- Minor plagiarism such as inconsistent or inadequate referencing, close paraphrasing;
- Copying 1-2 sentences or verbatim transcription presented as original work.

3. Moderate Academic Misconduct

3.1. Instances of academic misconduct are deemed moderate where the misconduct may be reasonably judged to be a moderate breach of ethical scholarship and includes (but is not limited to):

1. submitting an item of assessment for a unit that is submitted in another unit in partial form;
2. colluding with another student to produce assessable work and representing that as individual work when such collusion has not been authorised.

4. Major Academic Misconduct

4.1. Instances of academic misconduct are considered major where the misconduct may be reasonably judged to be a serious breach of ethical scholarship and includes (but is not limited to):

3. Plagiarism collusion
4. Inappropriate collaboration
5. Plagiarism
6. submitting an item of assessment for a unit that is submitted in another unit in complete deliberately fabricating or falsifying data, results or sources of information in an assessment item;
7. Misrepresenting or fabricating data or results or other assessable work
8. Cheating in examinations, including:
 1. using unauthorised material in an examination, including (but not limited to) written notes, formulae or other prompts whether stored on or within some object or device, or on paper or on the student's body; and/or
 2. communicating (or attempting to communicate) in an unauthorised manner with others during examinations (verbally or other means).

ii. Contract cheating, such as purchasing assignments or outsourcing assessable work,

4.2. In cases where a student enrolled in a capstone unit (or equivalent) is found to have committed academic misconduct in the capstone assessment item, the misconduct will be treated as a major breach, regardless of whether it is the student's first recorded offence. This reflects the critical significance of capstone assessments in the course and the expectation of independent, ethical scholarly work at this level.

4.3. All may lead to penalties for unsatisfactory course progress.

4.3.1. Major – First Instance

1. Lecturer refers case to Unit Coordinator, who refers to Academic Director.
2. Academic Director may recommend failure of unit and issue formal warning about consequences of further breaches.

4.3.2. Major – Second Instance

3. Referred to Teaching and Learning Committee by Academic Director.
4. Committee typically applies failure grade and considers suspension or exclusion.

4.3.3. Major – Third Instance

5. Teaching and Learning Committee usually applies failure grade, and may suspend or exclude the student for up to one academic year or cancel enrolment.

5. Subsequent Instances

5.1. Any further instances may result in expulsion or non-conferral of awards.

6. Concurrent Instances

6.1. In cases where students submit items for assessment concurrently in different units, and those items are found to exhibit evidence of academic misconduct, such collective breaches should, for the purposes of a penalty, be treated as a single instance only. Such leniency should only occur if it is clear that the student as a result of a concurrent or near-concurrent submission schedule, has not been in a position to benefit from counselling, has not previously received counselling for an earlier instance, and is likely to have committed the breaches without intent.

7. Plagiarism

- a. The following scale has been adopted across the Institute for the purposes of preliminary classification in cases of plagiarism:
 - i. Less than 10% - minor; 10-25% - moderate; more than 25% - major.
 - ii. This refers to the substantive content of the work (i.e. word length excluding properly referenced quotes, and footnotes/ endnotes except where plagiarism is contained in the latter). The extent of plagiarism will be calculated to include both unattributed word for word copying; work in which minor amendments have been made to unattributed source material (through substitution, transposition or exclusion of words); and the close paraphrase of the words and/or specific ideas of another person.

8. Mitigating Circumstances

- a. In the process of determining the level of academic misconduct that has occurred and the appropriate penalty to be applied once a case has been established, the Academic Director or Teaching and Learning Committee may take into account one or more mitigating circumstances that are deemed to bear upon the case.
- b. Such factors may include, but not be limited to:
 - i. differing educational, cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds of students at entry level;
 - ii. documented medical or personal circumstances of a nature to indicate serious impairment of responsibility at the time the academic misconduct occurred.

9. Principles Relating to the Handling of Alleged Academic Misconduct

The following principles are to be observed in all cases of alleged academic misconduct:

- a. Students will be informed of the allegations in writing and will be given an opportunity to respond before any decision is made. Students will be notified of allegations within 5 working days and cases resolved within 20 working days, unless exceptional circumstances apply.
 - i. The marker, Unit Coordinator, Academic Director, and Teaching and Learning Committee each have defined roles in managing cases as outlined in the Handling Academic Misconduct .
- b. Students have the right to be accompanied by a support person at any formal meeting.
- c. Evidence used to support allegations must be made available to the student.
- d. Decisions must be made by individuals who are impartial and not directly involved in the allegation
- e. All outcomes must be communicated in writing with clear reasons and information on the right to appeal.

10. Student Appeal

- a. A student can challenge the decision by lodging an appeal according to *Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure HEPP05*. All appeals lodged will be processed in accordance with the *Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure HEPP05*.
- b. This application should be submitted within 10 working days of notification of the outcome of the academic misconduct incident.

11. Responsibilities

- a. Marker/Lecturers: Detect, document, and report suspected academic misconduct within 5 working days.
- b. Unit Coordinator: Review reported cases, classify misconduct, apply penalties for Minor cases, and refer Moderate and Major cases to Academic Director.
- c. Academic Director: Review Moderate and Major cases, approve penalties or escalate Major cases to Teaching and Learning Committee.
- d. Teaching and Learning Committee: Review Major cases and repeat offences; apply final penalties.
- e. 13.5 Appeals Board: Manage appeals fairly and independently under the Academic Appeals Policy HEPP05.

12. Reporting and Records

- a. All academic misconduct is recorded in the Academic Integrity Register.
- b. Reports are submitted to the Academic Board each semester.
- c. Annual analysis of misconduct trends is conducted by the Teaching and Learning Committee.
- d. All documentation is stored securely in the Student Management System and individual student records.



RELATED DOCUMENTS

Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure HEPP05
Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure HEPP01
Assessment Policy and Procedure HEPP04
Student Charter HEMIS14
Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedure HEPP03
Student Conduct Policy HEPP07

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018, Standard 8 (Specifically 8.8.1)
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011

RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance, Monitoring and Review: The Corporate Board is responsible for the development, review and implementation of this policy and procedure. Responsibilities for actions under this procedure are detailed throughout this document.

Reporting: The Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee, or nominee, shall provide a report to the Academic Board of academic misconduct cases at the conclusion of each semester. The Academic Board will review trends in academic misconduct reports annually to identify patterns and inform improvements in teaching practices, assessment design, and academic integrity training. Insights gained will be used to update academic integrity strategies, procedures, and student support programs.

Records Management: All records relevant to this document are to be maintained in the student's academic file and on the SCEI-HE's Student Management System. Key trends and policy updates from academic misconduct reviews will be communicated to students via the LMS or newsletters.

DOCUMENT AND RECORD CONTROL

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