



Higher Education Academic Misconduct

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Contents

Contents	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Scope.....	4
3. Principles	4
4. Definitions	5
5. Process.....	8
6. Academic Misconduct Panel.....	10
7. Penalties for Academic Misconduct	10
8. Appealing against Panel decision	11

1. Introduction

Ada, The National College for Digital Skills is committed to upholding academic standards by ensuring the integrity of all aspects of the assessment process. The College is responsible for confirming that the regulations and policies governing the assessment of higher education programmes are applied consistently, fairly, and transparently.

In line with this responsibility, Ada, will take appropriate action against any student who breaches these regulations and policies whether inadvertently, through negligence, or with deliberate intent if such actions could provide an unfair advantage over other students.

This approach aligns with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) Quality Code, which advises that institutions must ensure "students do not obtain credit or awards through any form of unacceptable academic practice relating to assessment."

The College also acknowledges its duty, as outlined in the QAA Quality Code, to "implement effective measures to encourage students to develop and internalise academic values and good academic practice."

To protect the academic integrity of awards conferred by Ada, students and apprentices should receive guidance and support at the start of their studies on developing sound academic practices. This proactive support aims to reduce the likelihood of academic misconduct and minimise the need to invoke this procedure.

Accordingly, this procedure should be regarded as a final step, following a supportive approach that includes preventative measures to address poor academic

practice, malpractice, and misunderstandings.

Academic misconduct is defined as any inappropriate activity or behaviour by a student that could give themselves, or another student, an unauthorised academic advantage in a summative assessment. When investigating and addressing suspected cases of academic misconduct, the College will follow the approved policies and procedures.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled on HE programmes at the Ada College. It covers academic misconduct in any form of assessment including written examinations, assessed coursework (in whatever form the coursework might take) and oral/practical assessments.

There is no time limit beyond which academic misconduct will not be investigated. Suspected academic misconduct, whether discovered before or after graduation, will be investigated and dealt with in accordance with this policy. Where academic misconduct is proven after work has been formally assessed, this may lead to the withdrawal of credit previously ratified by Exam Board or withdrawal of a conferred award.

3. Principles

Ada College bases its Academic Misconduct Policy on the expectations and core practices outlined in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework for Disciplinary Procedures. Academic integrity underpins ethical decision-making and behaviour in an academic context. It is reflected in accepted academic practices and guided by the values of honesty, trust, responsibility, fairness, respect, and courage.

The College is committed to ensuring that all policies, procedures, and guidance related to academic integrity are clear, accessible, and actively promoted. Ada works with students to support the early development of academic integrity, recognising that those new to higher education may need time to fully understand and adopt expected standards. During these initial stages, poor academic practice will be addressed through pedagogical and formative approaches.

Students are expected to take responsibility for familiarising themselves with assessment rules, including conduct in examinations and the correct conventions for referencing and acknowledging the work of others. Ultimately, it is the student's responsibility to avoid breaches of regulations and to maintain academic integrity; lack of knowledge of this policy does not excuse any infringement.

Ada will act on all identified breaches of this policy, whether inadvertent, negligent, or deliberate. All work submitted for assessment must be the student's own, with no falsification of any kind. Allegations of academic misconduct will be treated in strict confidence, and no student will be recorded or referred to as having committed an offence until the full process, as detailed in Section 5, has been completed and the allegation proven.

4. Definitions

Ada adopts the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) definition of academic misconduct from its Good Practice Framework for Disciplinary Procedures: *“Any action by a student which gives, or has the potential to give, an unfair advantage in an examination or assessment, or might assist someone else to gain an unfair advantage, or any activity likely to undermine the integrity essential to scholarship and research.”*

Academic misconduct typically falls under the following categories: plagiarism, collusion, fabrication, cheating, and failure to obtain ethical approval.

- **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is presenting another person's work or ideas as one's own without proper acknowledgement, whether by direct copying or close paraphrasing. This includes text, images (graphics, illustrations, or photographs), designs, computer code, diagrams, data, formulae, or any other representation of ideas, from published or unpublished sources such as books, journals, the internet, course materials, or another student's work. Plagiarism can occur in both examinations and coursework, including essays, reports, presentations, dissertations, and projects.

Reusing one's own previously submitted work without acknowledgement, self-plagiarism is treated in the same way as other forms of plagiarism.

To avoid plagiarism, sources must be specifically, accurately, and clearly referenced according to accepted academic conventions. Direct quotations should be placed in quotation marks or indented and cited using a recognised referencing system. The origin of any data, tables, or charts must be clearly acknowledged, and ideas or arguments paraphrased from other sources must be properly referenced. Work that relies on lectures or tutorials should acknowledge this source.

For group work, module guidance will clarify whether the submission is collective or individual. In collective submissions, acknowledgement of sources is required, but individual attribution is not. For individual submissions resulting from collaborative work, each student must ensure the work submitted is their own, while appropriately acknowledging contributions from others.

- **Collusion**

Collusion is unauthorised collaboration between two or more people, typically with the intent to deceive. This includes conspiring to produce work together when it is intended that one or more students present it as their own, or providing previously assessed work or examination materials to another student in a manner that could give them an unfair advantage. In such cases, all parties involved are considered guilty of collusion.

- **Fabrication**

Fabrication involves inventing, altering, or falsifying data or evidence submitted for assessment. This includes falsifying questionnaire results, research data, certificated or portfolio evidence, or entries and signatures in assessment records.

- **Cheating**

Cheating encompasses any behaviour that interferes with fair assessment and may provide an unfair advantage, including:

- Violating College examination room rules.
- Accessing examination papers prior to the assessment.
- Engaging in behaviour likely to disadvantage other students.
- Arranging for someone else to fraudulently represent the student in an assessment.
- Submitting fraudulent claims for extenuating circumstances.

5. Process

All potential instances of poor academic practice or academic misconduct require appropriate action. In addition to cases discovered by the Module Lead (for example, in work submitted for a module they teach), all suspected infringements must be reported to the Module Lead before any formal allegation is made to the student.

The individual identifying the suspected infringement is responsible for clearly describing the nature of their concerns and providing supporting evidence to show how and where the infringement occurred. If a marker suspects an infringement, they should, where appropriate, annotate the student's work to indicate the nature of the suspected offence and report their concerns to the Course Leader.

If an invigilator suspects a student of breaching examination rules or other assessment-related requirements, they should follow the procedures outlined in the College Examinations' Procedures and provide a report to the Module Lead.

Module Leads should be aware that, particularly in the early stages of a programme, it may not always be appropriate to escalate a case to a formal allegation. Work or conduct that can reasonably be considered as poor academic practice should generally not be treated as academic misconduct.

If the Module Lead determines that sufficient evidence exists to suggest that an offence may have occurred, they must:

- Complete the Allegation of Academic Misconduct form including:
 - Student name, ID number, level of study, and programme details

- Module details, including assessment component weighting
 - The formal allegation to be presented to the student
 - A summary of the alleged offence
- Submit the completed form and supporting evidence to the Higher Education Quality and Standards Lead

Upon receipt, The Higher Education Quality and Standards Lead will decide whether:

- No further action is warranted due to insufficient evidence
- The student should receive an informal warning
- The matter constitutes a serious offence that should proceed to a College Hearing

If the Higher Education Quality and Standards Lead determines that there is sufficient evidence, a formal allegation will be made. The student will be notified in writing, which will:

- Set out the allegation as defined by the Course Leader
- Request confirmation of whether the student wishes to attend a hearing
- Ask for a response within ten working days
- Include a copy of the Academic Misconduct Policy
- Include copies of any supporting evidence or reports

Every effort should be made to resolve the matter before the relevant Exam Board meets. If no written response is received within ten working days, this will be treated as acceptance of the allegation, and the Higher Education Quality and Standards Lead will refer the case to the Academic Misconduct Panel. If the student accepts the allegation but does not wish to respond in person, the case will still be referred to the Panel for consideration.

If the student denies the allegation, the Higher Education Quality and Standards Lead will invite them to attend a hearing before the Academic Misconduct Panel, providing at least five working days' notice.

6. Academic Misconduct Panel

The Academic Misconduct Panel will consist of:

- Head of Faculty
- Higher Education Quality and Standards Lead
- Two academic staff members

The Panel's decision on whether an offence has been committed is final and will be reported to the student and the Exam Board. In determining any recommended penalty, the Panel will consider:

- The severity of the offence
- The intent
- Whether it is a first or subsequent offence
- The academic stage of the student
- Any mitigating circumstances
- The proportionality of the penalty to the offence

7. Penalties for Academic Misconduct

The College has structured its penalties for academic misconduct in accordance with the guidelines developed by plagiarismadvice.org and the AMBer Project Tariff. Penalties are designed to be fair, proportionate, and consistent, reflecting the

severity and intent of the offence while supporting students' understanding of academic integrity.

Penalties may include, but are not limited to:

- **Formal warning:** Issued for minor or first-time offences where the student demonstrates understanding and acceptance of the issue.
- **Mark reduction or zero award for the assessment:** Applied when the misconduct has affected the integrity of a specific piece of work.
- **Re-submission under supervision:** The student may be required to revise and resubmit the work within a set timeframe.
- **Module failure:** In cases where the misconduct significantly undermines the assessment or learning outcomes.
- **Suspension or expulsion:** Reserved for serious or repeated offences where the integrity of the College's awards is at risk.

8. Appealing against Panel decision

Students and Apprentices who wish to appeal the decision of the Academic Misconduct Panel should refer to the College's Academic Appeals Policy. Appeals will be considered in accordance with the procedures and grounds outlined in that policy.