

HE Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedure

2024/25

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Introduction

- 1.1. This policy explains the importance of academic integrity and sets out the procedures that underpin the academic misconduct policy principles which all current and former students are expected to follow.
- 1.2. Academic Misconduct is an action which gains, tries to gain, or assists others in gaining or attempting to gain an unfair academic advantage, these include but not limited to the following examples:
 - Plagiarism
 - Self-plagiarism
 - Cheating
 - Contract cheating
 - Fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation
 - Collusion
 - Impersonating someone or being impersonated
 - Failure to meet ethical and professional obligations.
- 1.3. Where you are enrolled onto programmes awarded through collaborative arrangements, the policies of the awarding University will apply. See [Appendix 1](#) for further details.

Scope

- 2.1. The policy applies to all current and former students at Tameside College (We). It is intended to encompass all programmes delivered and assessed by the College. This policy has been created to maintain the integrity of our academic awards and to ensure the validity and authenticity of its assessment. The procedures give any student affected a fair opportunity to respond to any allegation of academic misconduct. The policy encompasses all forms of academic misconduct irrespective of the mode of delivery or learning platform. This includes, but not limited to, face-to-face courses, online courses, blended/hybrid courses, and any other academic activity offered by or affiliated with the college.
- 2.2. This policy does not cover non-academic misconduct and disciplinary action, which is covered in the [HE Acceptable Behaviour Policy](#). For example, dishonest behaviour

when providing false information on your extenuating circumstances form would be non-academic misconduct.

- 2.3. All students should familiarise themselves with this policy and procedures document and read it alongside the [HE Acceptable Behaviour Policy](#). Failure to read and understand these guidelines cannot be accepted as a valid excuse for not following the rules.
- 2.4. In accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#) we are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our education and academic activities. As part of this commitment, we strive to ensure that our academic misconduct policy is fair, unbiased, and free from any form of discrimination or prejudice in line with our [Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) statement below.
- 2.5. We believe that every student regardless of their background or characteristics should be treated with respect, dignity, and fairness in addressing any allegations or incidents of academic misconduct.

What is Academic Misconduct?

- 3.1. Academic Misconduct is defined by the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#) (OIA) as “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.”
- 3.2. This refers to any act which violates the principles of academic integrity, including but not limited to the following examples:
 - **Plagiarism:** Presenting someone else’s work, ideas, or words as your own without proper referencing or acknowledgement.
 - **Self-plagiarism:** submitting the same work that you have already submitted for another assessment when it is not permitted.
 - **Cheating in examinations** (or other formal assessment), including possession of unauthorised material or technology during an examination, and attempting to access unseen assessment materials in advance of an examination.
 - **Contract cheating:** where someone completes work for you, and you submit it as your own (including use of essay mills or buying work online).

- **Fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation:** Falsifying, inventing, or altering data, sources, citations or any academic record or document.
- **Collusion:** unauthorised collaboration with others when the work is intended to be your own work.
- **Impersonation:** Assuming another person's identity or allowing someone else to complete academic work on your behalf.
- **Fraudulent claims:** submitting fraudulent extenuating circumstances claim or falsifying evidence in support of extenuating circumstances claims (may also be considered a non-academic disciplinary matter).

Support and Training

- 4.1. At the beginning of your course, you will be provided with introductory training on what constitutes plagiarism and academic misconduct as part of the course induction. Throughout your course you should ensure that you refer to this training material to make sure you are adhering to academic integrity. This training can be found on the [Student Portal](#).
- 4.2. This training is mandatory, further support can be requested by teaching staff on behalf of a student or group of students or students are welcome to self-refer.
- 4.3. If you require further support and advice regarding academic misconduct, you can contact your course teacher in the first instance, and they may refer you to the Learning Hub Team for further academic writing training or support.
- 4.4. If you require any assistance with seeking support, you can contact the HE Quality Officer in the first instance using email hequality@tameside.ac.uk or ext. 0161 908 6763.

Policy principles

- 5.1. We aim to encourage good academic practice by giving you the tools to avoid academic misconduct. This is carried out by our training sessions given to students at the beginning of every academic year with continued support and guidance throughout your studies.
- 5.2. Demonstrating good academic practice ensures that anyone who reads your work can easily identify your own thoughts and ideas on a subject and can distinguish

these from the thoughts and ideas of others. Ensuring you are upholding the values outlined in the [HE College Charter](#).

- 5.3. When submitting assessed work, you should ensure that this is original work written in your own words. Work submitted for assessment should not be copied from another source or produced by another person or automated software tool or programme or should not be altered by another person or by using an automated software tool.

Roles & Responsibilities

Teachers & Markers

- 5.4. Cases of suspected academic misconduct are identified by markers in the first instance.
- 5.5. Teachers and markers may be able to identify potential cases of academic misconduct when marking your work. They could identify possible changes in your writing style which may indicate that you have not written the assignment yourself. They can make this judgement by comparing your assignments across a module. There may also be significant differences in content or style within the same piece of work which could suggest that not all the words used by you are your own.
- 5.6. The teacher will then consult the [Turnitin](#) report once the work has been assessed.

Head of Department

- 5.7. The Head of Department will be responsible for considering cases of suspected academic misconduct and decide if there is sufficient evidence for a referral. The severity of the misconduct can determine if your case will be referred for academic study skills support or to the HE Quality Team for further consideration.

HE Quality Team

- 5.8. HE Quality Team will decide whether an academic misconduct investigation should be carried out or whether to issue you with an informal warning.
- 5.9. They will be responsible for recording and monitoring all information from the case including any entries on your record.
- 5.10. If an Academic misconduct investigation is needed the HE Quality Team will co-ordinate the investigation and panel meeting.

Investigators

- 5.11. Investigators will be a group of impartial HE staff including HE teachers and the Head of departments from other curriculum areas. These will be impartial to your course of study, the marking progress, and your own journey.

Students

- 5.12. It is your responsibility to maintain your understanding of what academic misconduct is, how to avoid it and develop good academic practice.
- 5.13. By submitting an assessment to be marked you are declaring that the work you are submitting is your own. You will be asked to sign a declaration when you submit a piece of assessed work to confirm the work is your own.
- 5.14. It is important to understand that if you do not fully acknowledge the sources that have contributed to and informed your work, you are misrepresenting your knowledge and abilities. Since this may give you an unfair academic advantage in assessment it will be regarded as academic misconduct.
- 5.15. You can use automated tools to proofread your work and highlight errors (e.g., Microsoft Word Spell Checker). This may include:
- identifying errors in spelling, punctuation, typing mistakes or poor grammar and suggesting alternatives.
 - highlighting redundant or missing words.
 - highlighting formatting errors.
 - highlighting general clarity of writing - where the meaning of a passage is unclear this may be highlighted but not rewritten.
- 5.16. **You must not** use automated software tools to suggest or make changes to your work unless the module permits it or as a reasonable adjustment for a disability. The following are not permitted unless agreed with your teacher:
- rewriting or editing sections or sentences to improve the clarity of the argument/meaning or develop an argument or idea.
 - rearranging passages of text or reformatting the material.
 - correcting factual errors or changing any factual information.
 - adding any material or commenting on the content of the work.
 - translating the work into English (or any other language).

- altering the length of the work by more than a few words.
- correcting calculations, formulae or equations, or re-label diagrams, charts, or figures

Detection Software

- 5.17. As part of our marking process all assessments are run through a plagiarism detection software called Turnitin. This software identifies matching text from other electronic sources of work already submitted online.
- 5.18. The software compares each assessment to a database of other assessments submitted at Tameside College and at other colleges and universities in the UK and around the world. It also compares the assessment to a range of other sources, from scholarly articles to blog posts. Assessments that receive a high score on Turnitin are then scrutinised by the marker to check whether plagiarism has indeed taken place. Markers can also identify cases of plagiarism in assessments that receive a relatively low Turnitin score.
- 5.19. In summary, Turnitin is a tool that markers use in conjunction with their own judgment.

Levels of Academic Misconduct

Low

- 5.20. Low level of academic misconduct typically refers to minor infractions that may be unintentional or result from a lack of understanding or awareness of academic rules. Examples of low academic misconduct include minor instances of plagiarism and citation errors that do not significantly impact the overall integrity of the work.

Moderate

- 5.21. Moderate academic misconduct involves more intentional or serious violations of academic rules. This may include instances of repeated plagiarism, deliberate cheating on exams or major assignments or engaging in unauthorised collaboration.

Severe

- 5.22. Severe academic misconduct refers to serious violations that significantly undermine the principles of academic integrity. Examples of severe academic misconduct may

include fabricating research data, submitting someone else's work as one's own, engaging in large scale cheating schemes or falsifying academic records.

Confidentiality

- 5.23. During the investigation only those directly involved in the investigation will have access to the information and supporting documents related to the case. If you are submitting an extenuating circumstance form as part of your evidence, this information will only be shared with the investigator and the disciplinary panel. Please speak to your Course Lead if you have any concerns regarding this.

Maintaining Fairness

- 5.24. All alleged cases of academic misconduct will be investigated and addressed fairly without prejudice or bias. Should you require any reasonable adjustments during the academic misconduct procedures please contact Student Support (tcstudentservices@tameside.ac.uk) and refer to the [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) policy](#).

Record Keeping

- 5.25. A record of the academic misconduct case, investigation and outcome will be maintained and stored on ProSolution and an internal quality tracker in accordance with our [General Data Protection Regulation document](#) and the [Data Protection Act 2018](#).
- 5.26. You have the right to access all the material presented in during this process, if you like a copy of this information, it will be available to you on request. Please contact the Quality team at quality@tameside.ac.uk and they will arrange this for you.

Academic Misconduct Procedure

- 6.1. The procedure below outlines the three stages involved in investigating allegations of academic misconduct. Once submitted your work is run through plagiarism detection software and passed to the teacher for marking, these processes run in parallel.

Stage One: Initial Considerations and Preliminary Investigation

- 6.2. If a case of academic misconduct is identified by a teacher/marker they will refer the matter to their Head of Department (HoD) for consideration. You will be informed of this referral via your college email and an outcome will be given within 5 working days of this email.
- 6.3. The HoD will review the accusation along with Turnitin data to decide if there are reasonable grounds for concern and make a judgement on the seriousness of the case between Low, Moderate and Severe and make a decision whether to refer the matter to the HE Quality Team for investigation or the Learning Hub Team for study skills support or referencing training.
- 6.4. If you are referred to Study Skills support training, your teacher will explain the reasons for this training and consequences of repeating this offence. A disciplinary mark will not be added to your student record, a note will be made of the referral and what it was for (this will be made available for you to review). If you are referred again for academic misconduct this note and the support, you were given will be taken into account.
- 6.5. If the matter is referred to the HE Quality Team, they will instigate a formal investigation under stage two below. You will be contacted via email (college email address) and invited to respond to the allegations within 10 working days of receiving the email.

Stage two: Formal Investigation

- 6.6. If your case is referred to the HE Quality Team, they will appoint a member of the HE academic community to carry out an investigation into the allegation. This will be a Head of Department from a different department or an assistant principal.
- 6.7. You will be informed of your case referral via your College email address within 5 working days of the case being brought to the HE Quality Team's attention. You will be asked at this point if you wish to provide any supporting evidence or extenuating circumstances ([HE Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure](#)) to be taken into consideration as part of the investigation.
- 6.8. The investigator will be considering the evidence put forward. They will be reviewing your work against the Turnitin report as well as the concerns put forward by the

marker and will consider the level of academic misconduct involved (low, moderate, severe).

- 6.9. Once the investigation has taken place, the investigator will consider if academic misconduct has taken place or if you should be referred for academic study skills support.
- 6.10. You will be informed of the outcome of the investigation via your College email address within 10 working days of the investigation starting. The outcome will include the investigators report with an explanation of their findings and if you have been referred for academic skills support or an academic penalty applied.
- 6.11. As an outcome of this, if you have been referred for academic study skills support, the investigator may refer your work to be remarked by a subject specialist such as the lead Internal Verifier (IV) for the curriculum department.
- 6.12. Academic study skills support is considered an informal warning about best academic practice. If you are given an informal warning it will not form part of your formal student record, but a record of the correspondence will be kept on your record.
- 6.13. If the investigator decides that academic misconduct has occurred a penalty will be imposed.
- 6.14. The College uses the Academic Misconduct Benchmarking Research Project (AMBeR) tariff, which allocates penalties for academic misconduct based upon a tariff constructed around the number of offences committed, the amount of work that is copied from other sources, within each offence, the level of sophistication used to disguise the offence, the size of the module and the level of study.
- 6.15. The tariff breaks down the case by measurable and quantifiable elements and sets a point value to them. The tariff focusses on five key areas:
 - History: How many times you have been caught plagiarising
 - Amount/Extent: How much of the work is plagiarised?
 - Student Level/Stage: How far along are you in college?
 - Value of the Assignment: How important was the assignment in terms of your grade?
 - Additional Characteristics: Did you attempt to hide the plagiarism and other miscellaneous factors.

- 6.16. Further details can be found via this link to [The AMBeR Tariff](#)
- 6.17. If, however the investigator decides that there is sufficient evidence of severe academic misconduct, they will refer the matter to be reviewed by an academic misconduct panel under Stage Three.

Stage three: Academic Misconduct Panel

- 6.18. If your case is referred to an Academic Misconduct Panel the HE Quality Team will set up the meeting. The meeting date will be agreed (a minimum of 5 working days' notice) that is suitable for you and the Academic Misconduct Panel which will allow time for supporting evidence to be submitted.
- 6.19. You will be given an opportunity to submit a response to the allegation either in person or via a written statement. If you wish to provide a written statement and/or extenuating circumstance, this should be submitted within two working days before the panel meeting. If you wish to attend in person at the panel meeting, you must notify the HE Quality Team within two working days before the meeting.
- 6.20. You may wish to bring an advocate to this meeting, such as a family member, friend, or staff member for personal and/or emotional support. The academic misconduct procedure is an internal college process and is not a formal legal process, therefore [legal representation](#) (see glossary for further information) is not required.
- 6.21. Panel members will be selected from a pool of impartial HE staff including teachers and the Head of Departments and Assistant Principals from other curriculum areas and who were not involved in the investigation at Stage Two. They will be selected on the basis of impartiality to your course of study, the marking progress, and your journey.
- 6.22. The panel will consider all the evidence presented to them and make a decision of their findings. The College uses the AMBeR Tariff, which allocates penalties for plagiarism based upon a tariff constructed around the number of offences committed, the amount of work that is copied from other sources, within each offence, the level of sophistication used to disguise the offence, the size of the module and the level of study. Further details can be found in section 6.15 of this policy.

- 6.23. You will be notified via your college email address of the outcome within 5 working days of the panel decision. This decision will include the investigation report, what was considered and how, what grounds a penalty was given and why (if applicable), the next steps and details of your right to appeal.

Impact of Penalties

- 7.1. Any penalty where your assignment score is reduced could have a detrimental effect on your overall module result and could mean the difference between passing or failing the module. A penalty which reduces the grade of pass you receive for your module could also affect your overall classification.
- 7.2. This may mean that you may have to resit a module, term, or year of study and this could have a financial impact as you will be liable to pay any extra fees incurred.
- 7.3. Academic misconduct can have a significant effect on your fitness to practice in certain professions. The consequences may vary depending on the specific profession and severity of academic misconduct. This may involve you being referred to the [HE Fitness to Practice policy and procedure](#).

Appealing an Academic Misconduct Decision

- 8.1. You have the right to appeal if you are unsatisfied with the decision made at any of stage of the academic misconduct procedures (stage 1, 2 or 3) by submitting a stage two formal academic appeal to your Head of Department or the HE Quality Officer in writing using the [academic appeal form](#). Your appeal should be submitted within 10 working days of your academic misconduct outcome.
- 8.2. The grounds in which you can submit an appeal are:
- That the procedures were not followed properly.
 - That the decision maker(s) reached an unreasonable decision.
 - That you have new material evidence that you were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.
 - That there is bias or reasonable perception of bias during the procedure.
 - That the penalty imposed was disproportionate, or not permitted under the procedures.

- 8.3. For further information regarding the academic appeals procedure refer to the [HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#) document.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion statement

- 9.1. Policies are inclusive of all Tameside Students, Learners, Enquirers and Alumni, regardless of age, civil status, dependency or caring status, care experience, disability, family status, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnerships, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation, or trades union membership status.

Review and Monitoring

- 6.1. We will provide an annual report on our feedback processes, including surveys, focus groups, suggestions, and complaints, in addition to any compliments received, to the College Corporation for monitoring and evaluation. An evaluation of feedback by relevant demographics will be undertaken to evidence the impact of the College's Equality Scheme.
- 6.2. We work closely with our university partners to ensure that our procedures are reviewed and updated on an annual basis. If we need to make a change to this policy and procedure it will be reviewed and signed off by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and these changes will be noted in the version log on the front page of this document.
- 6.3. A regular report will be provided to Senior Leadership Team by the Head of Quality and an annual report will be presented to the Governors as part of the College's quality assurance arrangements.

Related documents

[HE Academic Appeal Policy](#)

[HE Acceptable Behaviour Policy](#)

[HE College Charter](#)

[Fitness to Practice Policy & Procedure](#)

[Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) policy](#)

[Extensions and Extenuating circumstances Policy \(includes withdrawals\)](#)

[HE Terms and Conditions](#)

Glossary

Academic Integrity: a commitment to approaching your academic work honestly.

Advocate: An advocate for an internal college process is a person who supports and represents your interests in the college's internal procedures. This advocate can be a fellow student, member of staff or family member.

Legal Representation: College internal processes are typically administrative proceedings conducted within the college. Unlike formal legal proceedings, these internal processes are governed by the college's policies and procedures rather than by the legal system. While students can seek support from an advocate who is knowledgeable about the college's policies, legal representation is generally not part of the process.

Turnitin: an anti-plagiarism program that checks student submissions against a database, and records where there are instances similar to, or matches against, one of our sources, we will flag this in a report.

Appendix 1: University Partner Conditions

Course code	University	Link to regulations	Section
MHF018MQ MHF019MQ MHF020MQ MHF027MQ	Huddersfield	https://www.hud.ac.uk/policies/registry/regs-taught/	Academic Misconduct 10
MHF009MQ MHF017MQ MHF021MQ	Chester	Academic Integrity @ Chester SU	Academic Integrity

Appendix 2– Offences considered as academic misconduct

- 1.1. This section sets out the various behaviours that could be considered to be academic misconduct.
- 1.2. Academic misconduct covers a range of behaviours including presenting someone else's work as your own without proper acknowledgement or citation to gain some form of benefit or enable others to do so. It can be caused by poor academic practice and a lack of understanding of what is expected at your level of study or it can be intentional cheating.
- 1.3. Throughout this section, reference to 'work' or 'content' includes:
 - any material generated by an individual or automatically, including text, illustrations, graphs, data, computer code, information on forums, websites, or social media.
 - material generated using automatic tools such as paraphrasing tools, language translation software or mathematical solution generators.
 - any other content or information which is not your own original work, whether published or unpublished.

Plagiarism

- 1.4. Plagiarism is the presentation of work for any type of assessment which contains, (intentionally or unwittingly) unacknowledged published or unpublished words, thoughts, judgements, ideas, structures or images of some other person or persons work.
- 1.5. It may include:
 - copying other people's work if you provide a source but do not give a specific quote with a clearly defined beginning and end.
 - summarising or paraphrasing in your own words the ideas or information taken from a source without citing that source.
- 1.6. If you submit an assignment that contains work that is not your own, without clearly indicating this to the marker (fully acknowledging your sources using the rules of the specified academic referencing style), you are committing plagiarism, and this is academic misconduct.
- 1.7. Plagiarism could occur in a piece of assessed work by:

- using a choice phrase or sentence that you have come across or translated from another source.
- copying word-for-word directly from a text or other source without using quotation marks.
- poorly paraphrasing or translating the words from a text or other source very closely, using much of the original wording.
- using ideas, concepts, or data from a source without citing that source.
- using text downloaded from the internet, including that exchanged on social networks, copying, or downloading figures, photographs, pictures, or diagrams without acknowledging your sources.
- copying comments or notes from a tutor.
- copying from the notes or assignments of another individual.
- copying from your own notes, on a text, tutorial, video, or lecture, that contain direct quotations.
- using content obtained from websites or tools which either make other students' assignments available or provide solutions to assessed tasks (thereby enabling plagiarism).
- obtaining content from other sources, including other students, private individuals, assignment writing sites (so called 'essay mills') or other online tools and submitting it as your own.
- work generated by artificial intelligence and/or machine learning and failing to follow convention in acknowledging sources.

1.8. You may also be investigated for plagiarism if your tutor is unable to verify the work is your own.

1.9. It is important to understand that if you do not acknowledge fully the sources that have contributed to and informed your work, you are misrepresenting your knowledge and abilities. Since this may give you an unfair academic advantage in assessment it is regarded as academic misconduct

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools

1.10. Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) is a type of artificial intelligence which generates content in response to prompts from the user, including text, images, and code.

1.11. These tools include:

- those offering automated answers or solutions to assignment questions, such as equation solvers, or automated writing tools.
- those which reword or amend existing content such as translation tools, paraphrasing tools, or automated re-writing tools.