Academic Misconduct Policy

This policy defines what is considered to be Academic Misconduct by STC and NCC Education and describes the measures that apply once misconduct is identified.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definition

STC Higher Education defines **Academic Misconduct** as malpractice committed by a candidate during the course of any assessment, in controlled environments or coursework.

1.2 Summary

All work submitted for an assessment must be the candidate's own work. It is an offence for any candidate to be guilty of, or party to, collusion, plagiarism, or any other act which may mislead the examiners and moderators about the development and authorship of work presented in assessments. This includes misleading examiners and moderators about the sources of information included in an assessment. All academic writing must fully acknowledge all sources of information used in preparing the work being submitted. This includes acknowledging all written and electronic sources. For all NCC qualifications awarded at STC, it is expected that candidates will use Harvard-style referencing standards.

Candidates must not take any means of accessing information into an examination room, unless the rubric for that examination explicitly states that this is allowed. This includes:

- All internet-connected devices – computers, tablets, smart phones, etc.
- Mobile phones, pagers or other messaging devices
- Books, journals, or notes.

Where it is absolutely necessary to take any such materials into the room, they must be left with the invigilator (and, if an electronic device, switched off) prior to the exam commencing. Unless explicitly permitted and/or required in the specification or an assessment itself, candidates must always work alone on preparing their assessments.

2. TYPES OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Following NCC Education Policy[1], STC identified 5 types of academic misconduct: collusion, plagiarism, impersonation, exam conduct and fabrication of results.

Collusion	The preparation or production of work for assessment jointly with another person or persons. The only exception to this is when group work is explicitly permitted by the specification and/or assessment guidance. An act of collusion is understood to encompass those who actively assist others as well as those who derive benefit from others. Where joint preparation is permitted but the work is not in fact a joint production, the submitted work must be produced solely by the candidate/s making the submission. Where joint production or joint preparation and production of work for assessment is specifically permitted, this will be published in the appropriate assessment rubrics.

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[1] NCC Education (2018). Academic Misconduct http://www.nccedu.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/AQ_28-a02_Academic-Misconduct-Policy.pdf

Plagiarism	The use, without acknowledgement, of the intellectual work of others, and the act of representing the ideas or discoveries of another as one's own in written work submitted for assessment. To copy sentences, phrases or even striking expressions without acknowledgement of the source (either by inadequate citation or failure to indicate verbatim quotations) is plagiarism. To paraphrase without acknowledgement is also plagiarism. Direct quotations must be either in quotation marks, or indented, and directly acknowledged. The failure to correctly reference the work of others is deemed to be plagiarism regardless of whether this occurs intentionally or through ignorance of referencing requirements.
Impersonation	Occurs where someone other than the candidate prepares the work submitted for assessment. This includes purchasing or commissioning essays from third parties (including essay writing websites and other students) or asking someone else to sit an examination. Candidates who attend an examination without their student ID card or other acceptable form of photo-ID will not have their script marked until their identity has been confirmed.
Exam Misconduct	Includes having access, or attempting to gain access, to any books, websites, networks, memoranda, notes, unauthorised calculators, or any other material which has not been supplied by the invigilator or authorised in the rubric on the front of the examination paper.
	It also includes aiding or attempting to aid another candidate or obtaining or attempting to obtain aid from another candidate, or any other communication within the Examination Room.
Fabrication of results or observations	The reporting of artificial data from practical activities carried out by the candidate, or the use of artificial observations to support a hypothesis/conclusion.

STC deems all instances of academic misconduct as serious failures to respect the integrity and fairness of the assessment process.

2.1 Poor Academic Practice

Poor Academic Practice is the term used by STC to describe circumstances in which a candidate is judged to have committed Academic Misconduct, but either through extenuating circumstances or a lack of severity it is not easily classifiable under any of the types of misconduct listed above. In cases of Poor Academic Practice, a more severe penalty is deemed inappropriate, and therefore STC may decide to instead issue a warning, or to cap the candidate's mark at the pass boundary (40%).

In order to differentiate between Poor Academic Practice and Academic Misconduct as defined in Section 2, any person(s) investigating must be satisfied that there was no intention to deliberately mislead the markers and moderators, or to knowingly present someone else's intellectual property as the candidate's own work. In cases of suspected plagiarism, there must also be some attempt to reference correctly and the vast majority of the candidate's work must be their own work. Where a candidate fails to reference throughout an entire assignment, this is always deemed to be Plagiarism, even where unintentional and/or due to lack of understanding of referencing requirements.

3. INVESTIGATION OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT BY STC

For assignments marked centrally by STC, all candidate assignments are uploaded to Turnitin to return an Originality Report. These are reviewed internally prior to any penalty being recommended to the Assessment Board.

STC reviews all available evidence in order to establish if Academic Misconduct has occurred. Where an allegation of Academic Misconduct is supported by the evidence, STC must establish whether the issue is confined to one candidate's work or is more prevalent in the cohort. In order to establish this, NCC Education may need to request a further sample of locally marked work from the Centre, up to and including submission of the full cohort, or may require the Centre to re-check the cohort for evidence of Academic Misconduct.

In some cases, it may be required to interview candidates as part of the investigation process. In such cases, STC will write to the Head of Centre of NCC setting out exactly what information is required. Candidates are also expected to comply fully with any investigation. NCC Education together with STC holds the right to withhold marks as appropriate beyond the published results release date pending the outcome of any investigation into alleged Academic Misconduct.

Once an investigation is complete, all penalties are confirmed by the Assessment Board and communicated to candidates in a Candidate Academic Misconduct Report. The candidate is entitled to challenge this decision by requesting a Post-Results Service, as outlined in NCC Education's published *Post-Results Services Process.*

While Academic Misconduct investigations usually take place in the period leading to results release, there is no time limit on investigations and the application of appropriate penalties where evidence of Academic Misconduct is present. NCC Education holds the right to rescind an award if evidence of Academic Misconduct arises at a later date.

4. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT IDENTIFIED BY CENTRES

4.1 In Examinations

Cheating during an examination needs to be recorded by the Invigilator in an *Irregularities Report* (see Examinations Policy) and submitted with the *Invigilator's Report*. This report must be submitted along with the candidate's script for marking (for global examinations) or with the sample for moderation (for the local examinations).

4.2 In Assignments

All assignments marked by the local markers should be uploaded to Turnitin to obtain an Originality Report. STC strongly recommends that the Turnitin reports for all copies of work are reviewed, however if the report produces a **similarity score of 40% or more**, the assignment **must** be examined for plagiarism and/or collusion by centre markers.

If a Centre marker uncovers any form of academic malpractice in assignments submitted by candidates, penalties must be applied as set out in Section 5 below. Candidates are not permitted to work in groups unless explicitly stated in the rubric for an assessment. Any candidates whose work show an inappropriate level of similarity should have their marks reduced. If a candidate willingly permits a fellow candidate to access and copy their work, both candidates should be penalised.

For every locally marked assessment cohort, STC must complete a *Candidate Misconduct – Centre Declaration Form*. This form is required to confirm the marker has checked all work for evidence of Academic Misconduct, in line with this policy document. The marker should either indicate that no evidence of misconduct was found by signing Section A or should use the table in Section B to record any misconduct identified and the penalty applied. The completed form must be submitted with every module moderation sample.

4.3 Guidance on reviewing Turnitin reports

Although Turnitin reports give percentage scores, they do require careful interpretation before a penalty is applied. For example, a similarity score of 50% could mean that half of the work is identical to a single other source - which would be clear misconduct. However, it could mean that 50% of the assignment is made up of quotations from 10 different academic sources, and if they are all correctly referenced (and the remaining half of the assignment is original work) then the submission may well be accepted.

There is also a "background score" in every Turnitin report. This is caused by text which is shared between many different candidates' assignments - for example, the wording of the Statement of Confirmation of Own Work, module names, assignment tasks, etc. A typical background score, which can be ignored, is between 22 and 27% for most STC candidates. This is slightly higher (around 35-40%) for computer programming assignments, where legitimate strings of code will also generate matches.

5. SANCTIONS

The following is a list of Sanctions which STC may impose - predefined by NCC - on candidates where evidence suggests that Academic Misconduct has occurred. NCC will always review and have the final decision on the sanctions.

- **Warning**
  Marks are not reduced, but the candidate is issued with a warning against repeating their actions at future assessment cycles, with further escalated sanctions likely to be applied in this event.

- **Mark capped at 40 (pass mark)**
  Marks are reduced to 40, allowing the candidate to pass the assessment component but limiting them from achieving a merit or distinction grade.

- **Loss of all marks for a specific task/section of assignment**
  Where Academic Misconduct is identified in only one particular task or section of an assignment, the marks for that task/section may be set to zero.

  This penalty is not applicable to examinations, as any evidence of academic misconduct in an exam is a breach of the conditions under which a controlled assessment must be sat, and therefore affects all questions answered.

- **Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component**
  Where Academic Misconduct has been identified throughout a particular assessment component, the marks for that assessment component may be set to zero.

- **Loss of all marks for a module**
  Where Academic Misconduct is identified in the same module at consecutive assessment cycles, the marks for all **assessment components** for the module may be set to zero.

- **Disqualification from a Qualification**
  Where severe or repeated Academic Misconduct has been identified, a candidate may be disqualified from a qualification for a period of time. The candidate would then be required to re-register on the qualification, though credit could be transferred from the first attempt at the qualification (subject to the rules laid out in NCC Education's Academic Regulations). NCC Education reserves the right to extend disqualification to all NCC Education qualifications. Any decisions to disqualify candidates from a qualification are at the discretion of the Director of Quality and Academic Delivery.

The table below demonstrates the appropriate penalty to be applied according to the type of offence committed by the candidate. This is not an exhaustive list but includes the most common types of offences identified and penalised by NCC Education.

Type of offence	Penalty
Bringing unauthorised materials into the exam room	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Attempting to communicate with others in an exam, disruptive behaviour, etc.	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Copying from or allowing another candidate to copy from you during an exam	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Directly quoting text from NCC Education learning materials without appropriate referencing	Warning
Evidence of collusion in the work of two or more candidates from the same cohort, with evidence of collusion present in all or the majority of tasks (making up more than 50% of the total mark) in the assessment.	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Evidence of collusion in the work of two or more candidates from the same cohort, with evidence of collusion present in only certain tasks in the assessment (making up less than 50% of total mark).	Loss of all marks for a specific task/section of the assignment.
Isolated examples of plagiarism: ▪ Plagiarised text is generic in nature, e.g. definitions, describing established concepts ▪ Plagiarised text is in key parts of the assignment, such as analysis and evaluation, which should always be the candidate's own work.	Mark capped at 40 / Warning (where original mark is less than 40) Loss of all marks for a specific task/section of assignment
Consistent failure to reference throughout an assessment resulting in severe plagiarism.	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component.
Commissioning/attempting to commission others to write assessment on the candidate's behalf	Loss of all marks for a module
Falsification/alteration of results/data presented in an Assessment	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Repeated academic misconduct in same module at two assessment cycles (do not need to be sequential)	Loss of all marks for a module

Repeated academic misconduct in any modules at three or more assessment cycles (do not need to be sequential)	Loss of all marks for a module
Repeated academic misconduct in any modules at four or more assessment cycles	Disqualification from qualification

- The table above is not an exhaustive list of offences. Where serious Academic Misconduct occurs, NCC Education may escalate to more severe penalties as appropriate.

- Where a candidate is given warning for poor academic practice, if the candidate then commits a similar offence at a subsequent assessment cycle then the penalty may be escalated by NCC Education.

Candidate Misconduct Centre Declaration Form

Centre name:	
Assessment cycle:	
Module:	
Component: (e.g. Assignment/Local Exam)	

This declaration must be completed for all assessments marked locally by Centres. This includes global assignments and local examinations at Levels 3-5.

By signing and submitting this report, you confirm that all work submitted to NCC Education has been checked for academic misconduct during marking, as defined in NCC Education's Academic Misconduct Policy, found here: http://www.nccedu.com/policies--advice/policies-andprocedures.

You should only complete either Section A or Section B as appropriate.

Section A

By signing below, you are confirming that no misconduct has been identified in the work of candidates in this module.

Name of marker Completing declaration:	
Signature of marker Completing declaration:	
Date:	
Counter signature of Head of Centre:	

Section B

Please use the space below to report any academic misconduct found in the work submitted by candidates, providing details of the nature of the misconduct and any action taken, including mark deductions.

Candidate Name	Candidate ID	Nature of Misconduct identified	Action taken by Centre

Please continue on further pages if necessary.

Name of marker Completing declaration:	
Signature of marker Completing declaration:	
Date:	
Counter signature of Head of Centre:	