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GENERAL INFORMATION

1	Document category	Policy and Procedure		
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3	Minimum list of document users to be notified upon release of document update	All Academic Staff and students at MQF 1 – 4 programmes.		
4	Document change history			
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Consolidation of one policy and procedure for academic misconduct. As approved by Col on 15/1/21.				
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1. POLICY

It is the policy of MCAST to take a very serious view on academic misconduct. The appropriate sanctions are enforced whenever infringements are detected. However, these sanctions need to be commensurate with the academic (MQF) level of the student and always directed towards the academic development of the student with an aim to facilitate the learning of the student from one level to another.

The policy of MCAST, and, hence, this procedure aims to:

- a) Promote academic integrity and motivate Students to read and research, form and express their ideas and opinions;
- b) Nurture amongst Students the importance of being innovative in their project work and academic essays.

The purpose of this document is, therefore, to provide assessors with a framework that can be used to apply commensurate sanctions when detecting instances of academic misconduct.

(Note: Copying, cheating or sharing of information during a time-constrained assignment (TCA) is covered under MCAST procedure Document 038 Student Conduct Regulations and also Doc 188 College Academic and Student Disciplinary Board Procedure).

2. SCOPE OF DOCUMENT

This document applies to submissions by all MCAST and MG2I full-time and part-time Students on accredited programmes at MQF levels 1, 2, 3 and 4.

It is recognised that the first instance when Students are formally introduced and expected to use basic citations and referencing is at MQF level 3.

Students following programmes at MQF Level 4 will be expected to submit their assignments via the College's plagiarism detection software (see para 5 below)

3. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Student's submitted work shall be authentic, genuine, and not false or copied, wholly or in part. An authenticity declaration is completed and signed by the Student on the Assignment Front Sheet and/or when submitting assignments via Unicheck / MCAST Moodle.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 Assignment:** Any body of work assigned to a student, within a pre-determined short period of time, through which the student is to pass a set of criteria or LO/s.
- 4.2 In-text citation:** Referring to the works of others by placing relevant source information in inverted commas (" ") and adding the source of the text (Author's name, Book/Website, date etc.) after a quote or a paraphrase.

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- 4.3 End-of-text reference:** All of the sources referred to in the main body of the assignment are to be listed at the end of the assignment in a reference list. In a reference list, only sources from which one has either quoted or paraphrased need to be included.
- 4.4 Source:** Refers to the physical or digital space, such as journal or webpage, in which the source is housed. 'Author' is self-explanatory. 'Publisher' includes publishing houses, organisations and domain names. 'Content title' refers to the title of essay, article or data in any medium.
- 4.5 Applicability of rules:** Citation, referencing and other plagiarism prevention rules are to apply to any data in any medium, including text, images, videos, models, specimens and art pieces, belonging to third parties being directly or indirectly used within the learner's written and/or practical work.
- 4.6 Academic Misconduct:** any act (or acts) by which a student gains (or attempts to gain), or helps another student to gain or attempt to gain, unfair academic advantage in any of the formal assessment activities issued by the college as part fulfilment of a given programme of study
- 4.7 Plagiarism:** The deliberate and substantial unacknowledged incorporation in Students' work of material derived from the work (published or unpublished) of others or their own previous work (as defined in Doc 003: Programme Regulations MQF Level 1-3 and Doc 004 Programme Regulations MQF Level 4).
- 4.8 Collusion:** When a student allows another student (or students) to copy part of or all his/her work for them to submit it as their own individual work.
- 4.9 Falsification:** The falsification of data, results, facts, and/or references/sources with the intent of gaining unfair academic advantage.
- 4.10 Material:** Any student assignment formally submitted for assessment and grading, example but not limited to programming code, artefact, graphical work, concepts, designs, drawings, research proposals, model, project, group work, written submissions etc

5. USE OF PLAGIARISM DETECTION SOFTWARE

- 5.1** The official plagiarism detection software in use by MCAST is 'UNICHECK'. However, other means of plagiarism detection used by Assessors are also considered valid for grading of assignments (and also in case of student disciplinary boards) other than the individual plagiarism report generated by the detection software.
- 5.2** The use of UNICHECK is Compulsory for any MCAST and Mg2i programme accredited at Level 4, Level 5, Level 6 and Level 7 both Full-time and Part-time.
- 5.3** Any written work including (but not limited to) take-home assignments, Dissertations, Thesis and Written Project Work, etc. is to be submitted via Unicheck within the established deadline, except in cases where the lecturer explicitly informs otherwise due to the graphical or physical content of the assignment.
- 5.4** The UNICHECK submission is to be considered as the official assignment submission, with an identical hard-copy to be forwarded for official purposes.
- 5.5** It is important to note that whilst UNICHECK is able to show instances of similar text, it does not distinguish between similar text and plagiarism. It is the responsibility of the lecturer to interpret



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the reports generated by the software and to decide whether such similarity is in fact an instance of Plagiarism or not

- 5.6 UNICHECK is to be used as a tool which is meant to facilitate the task of the lecturer in identifying the parts of a student's work which are not original and take the necessary sanctions as explained in the procedure below.

6. PROCEDURE FOR THE APPLICATION OF SANCTIONS ACCORDING TO THE CATEGORY AND RECURRENCE OF INFRINGEMENT

- 6.1 All infringements and the related assessment decisions are to be recorded by the Assesor on the assignment front sheet and/or as annotations on the script.
- 6.2 Cases of academic misconduct are to be communicated by the assessor to the Institute Management.
- 6.3 A cumulatitve record of academic misconduct, for each student, is to be kept by the Institute management in order to determine recurrence.

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6.4 Cases of academic misconduct can be either Minor or Major as shown in the table below:

Category of infringement	Nature of infringement	
	EQF / MQF 3	EQF / MQF 4
Minor Infringement	<p>a) Copying of printed/online material, such as, but not limited to, notes, programming code, presentation slides, videos, images, secondary data, etc., without in-text citations and/or referencing.</p>	<p>a) Minimal use of printed/online material, such as, but not limited to, Lecturer's notes, programming code, presentation slides, videos, images, secondary data, etc., without in-text citations and/or referencing.</p> <p>b) Instances of incorrectly quoted, badly paraphrased or incorrect use of citations and/or referencing.</p>
Major Infringement	<p>a) Use of another Student's assignment or attempting to pass off someone else's written or practical work (written, artefact, programming code, etc.) as own. (Plagiarism)</p> <p>b) Delegation of written and/or practical task to others.</p> <p>c) Falsification of results, data and/or references.(Falsification)</p> <p>Other willful behaviour with the intent of deceiving assessor/s and/or gaining unfair academic advantage in formal assessment settings.</p>	<p>a) Substantial use and/or complete copying of printed/online material, such as, but not limited to, notes, programming code, presentation slides, videos, images, secondary data, etc., without in-text citations or referencing. (Plagiarism)</p> <p>b) Use of another Student's assignment or attempting to pass off someone else's written or practical work (written, artefact, programming code, etc.) as own. (Plagiarism)</p> <p>c) Presentation of own previous work as new without the correct referencing. (Self-Plagiarism)</p> <p>d) Delegation of written and/or practical task to others.</p> <p>e) Presentation of the same task/s as a result of group activity when this is not allowed (Collusion)</p> <p>f) Falsification of results, data and/or references.(Falsification)</p> <p>Other willful behaviour with the intent of deceiving assessor/s and/or gaining unfair academic advantage in formal assessment settings.</p>

Table 1. Category of Infringement/s MQF Levels 1 – 3 and MQF Level 4

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6.5 In the case of collusion, the sanction/s is/are to be applied to all students involved.

6.6 A sanction will be applied to cases of academic misconduct according to their category and recurrence. The table below describes the sanction to be applied.

6.7. A 'subsequent instance' (recurrence) occurs when a student on a programme of study has multiple instances of academic misconduct on one or more study units. The student will thus be deemed as having subsequent (recurring) misconduct infringement.

Occurrence/ Recurrence	Category	Sanction MQF 1 to 3	Sanction MQF 4
1st instance	Minor Infringement	Verbal warning	Verbal warning
	Major Infringement	Zero marks for sections of plagiarised material	Zero marks for sections of plagiarised material
Subsequent instance 1 (refer to paragraph 6.7)	Minor Infringement	Written Warning	Zero marks for sections of plagiarised material
	Major Infringement	Written warning and zero marks for assignment	Zero marks for sections of plagiarised material. A 'Pass Mark' (maximum of 50%) is assigned to the plagiarised material should the non-plagiarised assessed parts of the work submitted merit such a mark or higher.
Subsequent instance 2 (refer to paragraph 6.7)	In the case of subsequent instances of MAJOR infringements of academic misconduct, it is at the discretion of the Institute Management to determine whether the student is to be summoned to the Institute Disciplinary Board (IDB) hearing. The IDB can decide whether to assign additional sanctions (in addition to the ones described above) such as, a final written warning leading, but not limited, to the:		
	MQF Level 1 - 3		MQF Level 4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student can only obtain a Pass Mark (50 marks) for the unit - student being deprived of the opportunity of a Compensatory Pass; - student being deprived of the opportunity to sit for a synoptic 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student can only obtain a Pass Mark (50 marks) unit - Student being deprived of the opportunity of a Compensatory Pass; - student being deprived of the opportunity to sit for a synoptic - student failing the unit - student failing the programme in the case of repeated major cases of academic misconduct.



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Table 3 Academic Misconduct Sanctions

7. APPEALS PROCEDURE

7.1 Students have the right to appeal any sanctions imposed on them as a result of Academic Misconduct. Requests for appeal are to be submitted to the Institute Appeals Board (IAB) as described in *DOC 188 College Academic and Student Disciplinary Boards* procedure.

Reference Documents:

Doc 038 : Student Conduct Regulations

Doc 188 College Academic and Student Disciplinary Boards

Doc 076: Assignment Front Sheet (Individual criteria)

Doc 079: Assignment Front Sheet (Grouped criteria)

Doc 292: Assessment / Examination Result Appeal Form

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APPENDIX 1.

HOW TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

Sometimes what appears to be intentional plagiarism can be poor academic practice arising from a lack of understanding of standard methods of acknowledging the source of words, ideas and diagrams in your work. Where you are not sure whether or not you are committing plagiarism, you may either opt to not use the material or else consult with your lecturer/tutor on the best way to approach the problem.

Below are some points you can apply to avoid plagiarism.

1. If one is using the author's specific words, it is important to put these words within quotation marks and give credit to the source and the author. Remember to mention the author and source in the bibliography/references section and to reference it in the appropriate manner in the text, as required.
2. Paraphrasing and summarizing a text is a good way of avoiding plagiarism. However, remember that changing a few words, or the order of the sentence, does not make the text yours. To be fully clear of plagiarism you should use your own words and always remember to reference any source on which the idea was based.
3. When writing a paragraph, always make sure to distinguish whether the information you are giving is general knowledge, or not. If the information you are using is, in fact, general knowledge, then you do not need to cite the source. On the other hand, you must write the source of any other information that is not general knowledge.

To determine whether information is general knowledge or not, you must:

- a) Ask yourself if the information you are giving would be known by the majority of your audience. Common knowledge will most likely be known by everyone;
 - b) Make sure that the information you are giving is agreed upon by everyone and that it is "a known fact". If there are disputes over the information you are giving and different points of view, then it is not general knowledge and you must make sure to quote the various perspectives;
 - c) Determine whether the information appears unreferenced in a number of credible sources, as then it is most likely to be general knowledge; and,
 - d) Determine whether it is factual information, such as the birth and death of well-known people and dates of historical events, which does not need to be referenced being in the public domain.
4. Avoid procrastination (i.e., leaving your work to the last minute). Panic may lead you to plagiarism to finish on time.
 5. Last but not least, keep in mind that referencing is a very important tool that every student should make responsible use of. When used correctly, it will not only protect you from plagiarism, but it will also support your work by giving it a solid background.