

## HE Academic Misconduct Policy

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This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation, Disability.

### Alternative Format

This policy is available in alternative formats, to request this, please email [marketingcampaigns@mkcollege.ac.uk](mailto:marketingcampaigns@mkcollege.ac.uk)

## Version Control

Version Number	Author	Approver	Date approved	Next review date
1	Group Director Quality	Group Leadership Team	19/11/25	Nov 27

## Change log

Version Number	Summary of changes
1	New policy

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# 1. Introduction

The College recognises that student achievement must be based on robust, fair assessment and verification activities. When students achieve at Milton Keynes College stakeholders should be confident in the credibility of these achievements. It is vital that students and staff share a consistent understanding regarding what constitutes potential academic misconduct and the potential consequences of such malpractice.

The College expectation is that all staff have the expertise to make fair and consistent grading decisions for all students when assessing and moderating assessment decisions. The policy requires active commitment from all staff assessing on all programs to validate that student work is original and to take consistent action when academic misconduct is suspected.

# 2. Policy Statement

The aim of this policy is to ensure a fair, consistent, and transparent approach to the prevention, identification, and management of academic misconduct within Higher Education provision at Milton Keynes College.

The policy supports the promotion of academic integrity and good scholarly practice, recognising that students develop academic skills over time and that the College has a responsibility to educate and support students in understanding appropriate academic conduct.

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Assessment processes are valid, rigorous, reliable, and uphold the integrity of Higher Education awards.
- All student work submitted for assessment is the student's own and appropriately acknowledges the work of others.
- Students understand what constitutes academic misconduct and the potential consequences of engaging in such behaviour.
- Academic misconduct is addressed through a consistent, fair, and proportionate process.
- Both staff and students understand their shared responsibilities in maintaining academic standards and integrity.

- The assessment, investigation, and appeals processes meet the requirements of relevant Awarding Organisations, quality assurance expectations, and external regulatory bodies.

The College is committed to ensuring that all cases of potential academic misconduct are handled in a supportive and inclusive manner, with reasonable adjustments made where appropriate, and that students are treated with dignity, clarity, and fairness throughout the process.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all Higher Education students studying taught programmes at Milton Keynes College.

It covers all assessed work, including coursework, exams, online submissions, presentations, and practical assessments, whether these are marked or used for feedback. The policy applies to assessments completed on campus, online, or through blended or distance learning.

This policy applies to the use or misuse of artificial intelligence tools and other emerging technologies where their use contravenes assessment guidance or compromises the integrity of the assessment process.

The policy explains what happens if academic misconduct is suspected or confirmed at any point during your studies.

It also applies to College staff involved in teaching, assessing, and managing Higher Education courses, to ensure academic standards are applied fairly and consistently.

This policy works alongside other College regulations, including Awarding Organisation rules and student disciplinary procedures.

### 4. Academic Misconduct Definition

Academic misconduct refers to any action by a student that gives them an unfair academic advantage or compromises the integrity of the assessment

process. The following are categories and examples, not allowed by the College:

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of cheating and is classed as academic misconduct. If a student is found to have plagiarised, then they have committed a serious academic offence. Plagiarism comes in many forms but ultimately means attempting to pass off someone else's work or ideas as your own. The most common forms are:

- Copying another student's work (past or present).
- Copying or paraphrasing from textbooks, journals, or magazines.
- Copying or paraphrasing material (including images) from the Web.
- Use of generative artificial intelligence to create work for submission.
- Copying course material or lecture notes
- Using diagrams, images, or course notes without acknowledgement of their source.
- The misuse of sources outside the College.
- Employment of a professional ghost-writing individual or company or anyone else to produce work for the student.

## How is plagiarism identified?

Assessors provide the best safeguard against plagiarism, and additionally using electronic detection systems e.g., Turnitin. Indicators to an assessor or internal quality assurer (IQA) of potential plagiarism could include:

- Assignments that contain unfamiliar words.
- Use of plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin.
- A written style of a far higher standard or noticeably different than that demonstrated previously.
- An unexpected rise in the quality and accuracy of work.
- Use of texts familiar to the assessor but not referenced.
- Use of American spelling or unfamiliar terminology.
- Differences in the level of performance between assignments and activity completed under uncontrolled conditions.

- Learner being unable to explain what they have written about when questioned.
- Changes in the font, text size or colour during a piece of written work.

## Cheating and Collusion

Cheating is an attempt to deceive College/Awarding Organisation assessors, examiners and/or external verifiers and includes but not exclusive to:

- Providing or receiving information about the content of an examination before it takes place, except when allowed by the Awarding Organisation.
- College staff giving excessive help to learners in writing an assignment or writing any of it for them.
- Someone impersonating or trying to impersonate a learner or attempting to procure a third party to impersonate oneself.
- Learners using materials that are not permitted.
- Assistance, or the communication of information, by one learner to another in an assessment where this is not permitted.
- Offering a bribe of any kind to an invigilator, examiner or other person connected with assessment.
- Any attempt to tamper with assignment or examination scripts after they have been submitted by learners.
- Staff fabricating or falsifying data or results by individual learners or groups of learners.
- Impersonation linked to assessment or submission.
- Offering a bribe of any kind to an invigilator, a member of centre staff or Awarding Organisation staff
- Submission of work purchased from a third party. For example, from an essay or assignment writing service.
- Introduction of unauthorised material into the examination room.

An investigation will take place in accordance with the Academic Misconduct

## **5. Academic Misconduct procedure**

### **Identifying Potential Misconduct**

Academic misconduct may be detected through various channels, such as plagiarism detection tools (including similarity and AI-generated content reports), observations made during the marking process, or reports from staff regarding a student's intent or actions.

### **Stage 1: Initial Concerns**

For initial concerns identified through formative assessment, the assessor will address the matter informally with the student, explaining how the behaviour could escalate into misconduct this will include a discussion of the AMBeR tariff. A record of this conversation will be recorded on ProMonitor. Examples include incorrect referencing despite an attempt to cite sources, or early signs of collaborative behaviour that could lead to collusion. Where plagiarism, collusion or cheating is believed to have occurred because of poor academic skills, the assessor will also provide further support in the development of appropriate skills. This could include referring the learner to additional support mechanisms.

### **Stage 2: Academic Misconduct Investigation**

In suspected cases of purposeful academic misconduct for formally assessed assignments, the assessor will refer the work to the Course Team Leader. If misconduct is suspected, the Course Team Leader will consult with the Head of School or a senior team member. If both agree misconduct may have occurred, the student and the Deputy Director Quality will be notified via email, including a summary of the discussion and rationale.

Assessment results will not be shared with the student until an investigation is concluded. If the issue arises close to the scheduled release date, the Deputy Director Quality, will be informed.

Upon notification, the Deputy Director Quality will review the information to confirm whether it falls under the Academic Misconduct Policy and if it does not, the student may be redirected to a more appropriate process, such as the



complaints or academic appeals policies. If grounds are identified, the Deputy Director of Quality will assign the case to an impartial staff member for investigation.

The investigator may request a meeting with the student to gather more information, although this is not mandatory if the initial documentation is sufficient. Additional details may also be requested via email.

The investigator will determine, on the balance of probabilities, whether academic misconduct has occurred. Mitigating factors and potential consequences are considered.

We will aim to provide a full response within 15 working days of receiving the academic misconduct referral. This response will explain the decision clearly and outline next steps if the student wishes to appeal the decision.

All outcomes will be centrally recorded to help identify common causes of academic misconduct and inform improvements. These records also support monitoring and reporting, including analysis related to protected characteristics.

## **Penalties**

A range of sanctions are available and the AMBeR tariff will be utilised to determine appropriate penalties (See Annex 1 – AMBeR tariff).

If a sanction is imposed which involves the resubmission of a piece of work, the outcome will make clear whether this is a fresh chance to undertake the assessment, or whether this would count as a 'reassessment' or 'rework' opportunity in line with the regulations of the appropriate Awarding Organisation.

All decisions will be recorded and notified to the next available HE Exam Board for approval. Where HE Exam Board does not approve the recommendation, a student will be informed of this, and the new outcome, in writing within five days of the decision being made.

## **Academic Misconduct has not been committed:**

- No further action to be taken.
- The student to be cautioned about their conduct moving forwards, and a copy of the outcome will be kept on the student's file for future reference.

## **Academic Misconduct has been committed:**

In all of the instances below a copy of the outcome will be kept on the student's file for future reference.

The range of sanctions are listed in the AMBer Tariff and the points system will be utilised to determine appropriate penalty (See Annex 1 – AMBeR tariff).

A written outcome will be provided within 15 working days of receiving the notification. This response will explain the decision clearly and outline next steps if the learner wishes to appeal.

All outcomes will be centrally recorded to help identify common causes of appeals and inform improvements. These records also support monitoring and reporting, including analysis related to protected characteristics.

## **Stage 3: Appeals**

If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage Two investigation, they may submit a written request to appeal by email to the Group Director for Quality ([quality@mkcollege.ac.uk](mailto:quality@mkcollege.ac.uk)) within 5 working days. The appeal should include:

- Full name
- Contact details (address, phone, email)
- Programme of study
- Date of the decision being appealed
- Description of the decision
- Grounds for the appeal
- Any relevant supporting information

The Group Director for Quality will aim to acknowledge receipt within 5 working days and arrange for the case to be reviewed. If the student's expectations exceed the scope of the review, this will be clarified.

An appropriate member of the Group Leadership Team will complete the review.

The review will assess whether procedures were followed correctly, whether the Stage Two outcome was reasonable, and whether the student received a clear explanation. If new evidence is presented, the reviewer will consider whether there was a valid reason for its late submission.

The student will receive a written decision within 10 working days. The outcome will indicate whether the previous decision is upheld, partially upheld, or overturned.

If you are an Open University student, the decision letter or email will include a Completion of Internal Procedures letter, detailing how you may be able to request a review of the case by the Open University.

If you are a student on any other Higher Education course the decision letter or email will include a Completion of Procedures letter, detailing how you may write to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator about the handling of the case.

Final outcomes will be recorded centrally to support continuous improvement and enable analysis of appeal trends, including those affecting groups with protected characteristics.

## **Joint Allegations**

Students involved in group cases are informed of others' involvement but there must be no attempt to influence testimonies. The investigator may wish to meet with all students together, though individual outcomes may vary and are kept confidential.

## **Previous Offences**

Past misconduct cases may be disclosed to the investigator in order to inform decisions, especially if prior warnings were given about specific behaviours.

## Reporting to Higher Education Academic Board

At the start of each academic year, the Group Director for Quality reports anonymised data on misconduct cases, including trends related to protected characteristics.

## 6. Related Policies

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this policy, which can be found on the College Website [here](#)

Complaints Policy (Higher Education)

Whistleblowing Policy

Academic Appeals Policy (Higher Education)

- Open University Validated Awards handbook: [OU Handbook for Validated Awards | Validation Partnerships](#)
- Open University Validated Awards Regulations: [Regulations for validated awards of The Open University | Validation Partnerships](#)
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA): <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

# Appendix 1 – AMBeR TARIFF

## STEP 1 – Award points based on the following criteria.

### History

1 <sup>st</sup> Time	100 points
2 <sup>nd</sup> Time	150 points
3 <sup>rd</sup> Time or more	200 points

### Amount/Extent

Below 5% <b>AND</b> less than two sentences	80 points
As above but with <b>critical aspects*</b> plagiarised	105 points
Between 5% and 20% <b>OR</b> more than two sentences but not more than two paragraphs	105 points
As above but with <b>critical aspects*</b> plagiarised	130 points
Between 20% and 50% <b>OR</b> more than two paragraphs but not more than five paragraphs	130 points
As above but with <b>critical aspects*</b> plagiarised	160 points
Above 50% <b>OR</b> more than five paragraphs	160 points
Submission purchased from essay mill or ghost-writing service	225 points

\*Critical aspects are key ideas central to the argument

### Level/Stage

Level 4	70 points
Level 5	115 points
Level 6 or Postgraduate	140 points

## Value Of Assignment

Standard weighting	30 points
Large project (e.g. final year dissertation)	60 points

## Additional Characteristics

Evidence of deliberate attempt to disguise plagiarism by changing words, sentences, or references to avoid detection **40 points**.

## STEP 2 – Award penalties based on the points. Penalties (Summative Work)

In all cases, a formal warning is given and a record made.

<b>280 – 329</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No further action beyond formal warning</li><li>• Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required with no penalty on mark.</li></ul>
<b>330 – 379</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No further action beyond formal warning</li><li>• Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required with no penalty on mark.</li><li>• Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required but mark capped or reduced.</li></ul>
<b>380 - 479</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required but mark capped or reduced.</li><li>• Assignment awarded 0% - no opportunity to resubmit.</li></ul>
<b>480 - 524</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assignment awarded 0% - no opportunity to resubmit.</li><li>• Module awarded 0% - re-sit required, but mark capped or reduced.</li><li>• Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, but credit still awarded.</li></ul>

<b>525 - 559</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module awarded 0% - re-sit required, but mark capped or reduced.</li> <li>• Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, but credit still awarded.</li> <li>• Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, and credit lost.</li> <li>• Award classification reduced.</li> <li>• Qualification reduced (e.g. Honours to no Honours).</li> <li>• Expelled from institution but with credits retained.</li> <li>• Expelled from institution but credits withdrawn.</li> </ul>
<b>560+</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, and credit lost.</li> <li>• Award classification reduced.</li> <li>• Qualification reduced (e.g. Honours to no Honours).</li> <li>• Expelled from institution but with credits retained.</li> <li>• Expelled from institution but credits withdrawn.</li> </ul>

#### PENALTIES (Formative Work)

280 – 379	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal Warning.</li> </ul>
380+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal warning, with record made contributing to student's previous history.</li> </ul>