

# Academic Integrity Policy

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## Related Documents

Academic Integrity Procedure (forthcoming)

[Assessment Policy](#)

[Student Charter](#)

[Student Complaints Policy](#)

## 1. Context

Media Design School (MDS) is committed to fostering academic integrity in the pursuit of knowledge and to produce graduates with a strong sense of professional ethics. It is the shared responsibility of the whole MDS community to create an intellectual environment where academic honesty, critical judgment, and independent scholarly learning are well understood and highly valued. Prevention and education are the primary drivers in achieving this. Students have an obligation to work independently and apply scholarly academic conventions in examinations and other forms of assessment tasks. Teaching staff must educate their students in studying ethically and understanding the policies that govern academic integrity.

Any form of cheating, plagiarism or collusion, or other forms of dishonesty, devalues the quality of student learning and undermines the academic standards of MDS. There are serious consequences for students who do not act honestly and with integrity during their studies.

## 2. Definitions

**Academic integrity:** the embodiment of the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in achieving academic outcomes.

**Exclusion:** the cancellation of a student's enrolment in their programme and the termination of their rights and privileges as a student of MDS including the right to re-enrol in their programme or be admitted to another programme, for a defined period (two years). An excluded student may apply for re-admission to any MDS programme/s according to the [Admissions Policy](#) at the end of the exclusion period.

**Expulsion:** the permanent exclusion of a student with no right to re-apply for admission.

**Procedural fairness:** a fair and proper procedure appropriate to the circumstances, where decisions are made without bias and are supported by evidence and communicated with reasons.

**Self-plagiarism:** submitting the same, or substantially the same piece of work for assessment in one or more components.

**Suspension:** the cancellation of a student's enrolment and the withdrawal of the rights and privileges of a student, including the right to re-enrol as a student, for a specified time. Unless otherwise advised, the student has the right to recommence their studies at the end of the suspension.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled in one or more programmes at MDS.

The [Research Ethics Policy](#) covers ethical considerations and requirements when undertaking research.

### 4. Principles

- Academic honesty and integrity in assessment practices are fundamental to the nature of learning and quality at the higher education level
- Education, prevention, review, remediation and measurement are key elements in the promotion and establishment of an academic culture grounded on academic integrity.
- All students and staff have an obligation to respect the rules and practice of academic honesty and integrity, and uphold the high academic standards of MDS
- Assessments are designed to foster academic integrity and eliminate or minimise opportunities for students to gain an unfair advantage through academic misconduct.
- Students will be provided with induction and ongoing education and support in understanding academic integrity and the requirement for independent learning
- The procedures for addressing academic misconduct will be applied fairly and consistently, exhibit procedural fairness and will take into account the extent and type of academic misconduct, student's stage in the programme, and any history a student has in breaching this policy
- Current best practice will inform the regular review of this policy and related procedures.

### 5. Academic integrity strategy

The MDS academic integrity strategy consists of:

- **Educate:** Promoting a robust culture of academic integrity across MDS that takes an educative approach towards internalising policies and procedures and promotes good

practice as the standard for academic conduct.

- **Prevent:** Identifying the root causes of academic misconduct and address these through educational and cultural awareness programs. It necessitates prioritising the student's presence, identity and voice in the learning environment and developing staff capability to support the MDS strategy.
- **Review:** Strengthening academic integrity review processes in MDS.
- **Remediate:** Fortifying remedial processes and effective sanctions for offending students.
- **Measure:** Measuring and examining trends in academic integrity breaches to enable periodic adjustment of strategies to achieve continuous improvement on all academic integrity parameters.

## 6. Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct takes place when students act dishonestly in an assessment task or examination in order to gain an unfair advantage for themselves or other students. Acts of academic misconduct are considered to be misconduct as defined under the [Student Charter](#).

Examples of academic misconduct include:

### 6.1. Academic misconduct

Plagiarism is considered a serious breach of academic integrity principles. Plagiarism means:

- directly copying sentences, paragraphs or other extracts from someone else's work without appropriate acknowledgement. Such work includes published or unpublished documents, designs, sounds, images, photographs and films, programming code, libraries, plugins, data, 3D models, textures and materials, and any other digital files or assets paraphrasing someone else's work without acknowledgement by way of reference to the original work
- using facts, information and ideas directly derived from an identifiable source without acknowledging the source, and
- committing self-plagiarism.

### 6.2. Cheating in examinations

Cheating in an examination includes any action or attempted action designed to gain an unfair or dishonest academic advantage. For example, cheating occurs when students:

- have access to unauthorised material during the examination
- sit an examination on behalf of another student or permit another student to sit an examination on their behalf
- read, copy from or otherwise use another student's work, or knowingly allow another student to read, copy or otherwise use their work in an examination
- assist any other student in completing their examination, either directly or indirectly
- accept assistance from any person during an examination other than authorised staff
- inappropriately obtain prior knowledge of an exam's contents and/or expected answers.

### 6.3. Collusion

Collusion occurs when there is unauthorised collaboration in the preparation and production of work for assessment which is presented as the student's own individual effort. Collusion includes:

- assisting another student in committing an academic integrity breach in the process of completing an assessment task intentionally or otherwise
- accepting assistance in committing an academic integrity breach, intentionally or otherwise, when completing an assessment task
- unauthorised collaboration with other students when completing an assessment task
- submitting work which is the same, or substantially the same, as another student's piece of work for the same assessment task
- submitting files to assignment sharing websites
- assisting another student in plagiarising material or cheating in an examination.

#### **6.4. Contract cheating**

Contract cheating 'occurs when a student submits work that has been completed for them by a third party, irrespective of the third party's relationship with the student, and whether they are paid or unpaid' (Harper, Bretag, Ellis, Newton, Rozenberg, Saddiqui & van Haeringen, 2019, p. 1857).

#### **6.5. Other forms of academic misconduct**

There are many ways in which a student might attempt to gain an unfair advantage by dishonest means deliberately. Some examples are:

- submitting fabricated or falsified data as if they were genuine
- inventing references, quotes or sources
- falsely indicating attendance at an activity when attendance is an assessment requirement.

## **7. Responsibilities of students and staff**

### **7.1. Students**

In general, a student must:

- maintain the highest standards of honesty in all aspects of their scholarly endeavours in order to preserve the value and quality of their learning
- be familiar with and adhere to the academic integrity principles outlined in this policy and promote these to their peers throughout the learning process
- not submit another person's work as their own, or submit work created with the assistance of others unless collaborative work is expressly allowed
- learn and observe the accepted academic referencing and other academic requirements of their field/s of study, and
- keep drafts and backups of their assignment in order to provide supplementary evidence to prove their authorship of the work if needed.

### **7.2. Media Design School and staff**

All staff are committed to fostering an environment that promotes academic integrity, through education and prevention, and by being a role model for students and their peers. They must be familiar with this policy, supporting procedure and guidelines, and foster an environment that promotes academic integrity.

The Learning and Teaching Committee reviews and monitors the implementation of the policy and procedure, ensuring a consistent approach across programmes.

Programme Directors and Leaders must ensure that assessments are designed according to the principles outlined in this policy and the [Assessment Policy](#). They (or their delegate) must

investigate allegations of academic misconduct and determine appropriate educative interventions and penalties.

Academic staff who assess students' work are responsible for:

- implementing MDS prevention and education strategies
- demonstrating best practice at all times with respect to component content and assessment delivery
- educating students in appropriate referencing techniques and clearly explain what constitutes plagiarism, collusion and other forms of cheating, and
- identifying initially instances of academic integrity breaches and must refer these to the relevant staff for review as per the Academic Integrity Procedure.

## 8. Allegations and penalties for academic misconduct

All allegations of academic misconduct will be investigated by the Programme Director or Leader (or delegate), and if substantiated will result in the provision of academic counselling and may result in penalties appropriate to the case. In a case where the conduct of the student prejudices the interests of other students or the integrity of the assessment scheme itself, the conduct will be referred for action under the *Student Charter*.

The following will be considered when determining the seriousness of an act of academic misconduct:

- type of academic misconduct
- the extent of academic misconduct
- the experience of the student
- prior offences, if any (this will include prior offences in other programmes at MDS)
- student's stage or level in the programme.

Academic misconduct may be deemed minor or significant:

- Significant - based on available evidence, an academic misconduct is deemed significant if it:
  - is or appears to be deliberately planned, and/or
  - is or appears to be substantial in scale or scope.

Contract cheating is considered a significant academic integrity breach.

- Minor – based on available evidence, any academic misconduct that is not deemed significant will be deemed minor.

### 8.1. Initial and minor academic misconduct

A first-time substantiated breach of this policy that is deemed minor will be recorded on the student's file and will result in the provision of academic counselling to ensure the process is an educative one for the student.

If deemed appropriate given the factors listed in section 8, a penalty may also apply. This may range from a warning to a downgrade in the mark for the relevant assessment item or task.

The degree of academic misconduct should be considered when applying the penalty for an initial breach of this policy. Any mark awarded will be based on the content of the submitted work that has not been part of the academic misconduct.

In describing the outcome of a substantiated case of academic misconduct, the student will be provided with a notification that a subsequent finding of academic misconduct, depending on the severity of the breach, may result in a penalty ranging from a downgrade in the mark for the relevant assessment task to expulsion.

## **8.2. Initial and significant academic misconduct**

A first-time substantiated breach of this policy that is assessed as significant will be recorded on the student's file and will result in the provision of academic counselling to ensure the process is an educative one for the student.

- Given the significant nature of the breach, a penalty will also apply. Penalties may range from a student receiving a downgrade of mark for the relevant assessment item or task to a downgrade on the student's final grade for the component.

In describing the outcome of a substantiated case of academic misconduct, the student will be provided with a notification that a subsequent finding of academic misconduct, regardless of severity, may result in a Fail for the relevant component, suspension or exclusion.

## **8.3. Second and minor academic misconduct**

A second substantiated breach of this policy will be recorded on the student's file and will result in the provision of academic counselling to ensure the process is an educative one for the student.

Given the repeated nature of the breach, a penalty will also apply. Penalties may range from the student receiving a downgrade of mark or unsatisfactory outcome for the relevant assessment item or task to a downgrade on the student's final grade for the component.

In describing the outcome of a substantiated case of academic misconduct, the student will be provided a notification that a subsequent finding of academic misconduct, regardless of severity, may result in a Fail for the relevant component, suspension or exclusion.

**Note:** A third instance of minor academic misconduct will be processed according to *second and significant academic misconduct*, or subsequent breaches (see section 8.4), regardless of the severity of the breach.

## **8.4. Second and significant academic misconduct or subsequent breaches**

A second and significant substantiated breach of this policy or a breach of any kind for the third or more time will be recorded on the student's file and will result in one or more penalties.

Given the repeated and/or significant nature of the breach, the penalty will be a fail for the component, but having regard to the factors listed in section 8 may also be a more significant penalty, including but not limited to:

- a probationary period of up to two years. During this time any further breaches result in automatic exclusion
- referral to the *Student Charter* with a recommendation of suspension for one or more study periods, exclusion or expulsion from the programme.

## 9. Record keeping

MDS:

- will establish and maintain a records management system to ensure the security and confidentiality of records of alleged academic integrity breaches as well as investigation findings, and
- records all academic integrity breaches, including documentation for at least five years, and allows relevant parties appropriate access to these records consistent with the provisions of the [Privacy Policy](#).

## 10. Complaints and appeals

Students dissatisfied with outcomes and penalties applied under this policy have access to the appeals process outlined in the [Student Complaints Policy](#).

## 11. Reporting

Academic integrity reports and continuous improvement plans will be tabled at the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Academic Board. Reports will be submitted annually. Refer to the Academic Integrity Procedure for details on the reporting process and requirements.

## 12. References

*Education Act of 1989 (NZ).*

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM3988805.html>

Harper, R., Bretag, T. Ellis, C., Newton, P., Rozenberg, P., Saddiqui, S., & van Haeringen, K. (2019). Contract cheating: a survey of Australian university staff. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44 (11), 1857-1873. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1462789>

New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (n.d.). *Effective practice for preventing and detecting academic fraud*. <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/NZQA-Effective-practice-guide.pdf>