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1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is the practice at MCAST for academic staff to employ a combination of formative and summative assessment for the benefit of MCAST students.
- 1.2 This document should be used in combination with other MCAST documents, including but not limited to Doc003, Doc004, Doc005, Doc006, Doc007, Doc008, Doc016, Doc133, and Doc350, accessible from the MCAST website - www.mcast.edu.mt

2. Purpose

- 2.1 To define and regulate the ethical academic policy of the College. The underlying values are the promotion of honest academic work, including acknowledging the work of others and giving credit where other people's work and ideas are used in any way or form.
- 2.2 To ensure fair assessment and avoid cheating in any way or form.
- 2.3 To guide students to have a good work and research ethic and sit/submit work for assessment that is in line with the College's ethics.
- 2.4 To provide an easy-to-use reference guide and appropriate sanctions for academic misconduct aligned with MQF Levels.

(Note: Copying, cheating or sharing of information during a time-constrained assignment (TCA) are also referred to under MCAST procedure Doc038 Student Conduct Regulations and Doc188 College Academic and Student Disciplinary Board Procedure).

3. Scope

- 3.1 This document applies to assessment submissions by all MCAST and MG2I full-time and part-time students on accredited programmes at MQF levels 1-8

4. General Requirements

- 4.1 An authenticity declaration must be completed and signed by the Student on the Assignment Front Sheet and/or when submitting assignments via Turnitin/MCAST Moodle.
- 4.2 Students following programmes at MQF Level 4 and higher must submit assignments via the College's plagiarism detection software.

5. Use of Plagiarism Detection Software

- 5.1. The 'Turnitin Originality Report' is generated automatically via the Turnitin plagiarism detection software in the official report in use at MCAST. However, Assessors are encouraged to use other means of plagiarism detection that they deem valid for grading of assignments (and, also, in case of student disciplinary boards).



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- 5.2. The use of Turnitin is compulsory for any Full-time and Part-time MCAST and Mg2I programme accredited at Level 5, Level 6, Level 7 and Level 8. (It is also to be utilised at Level 4 as a learning tool.)
- 5.3. Any written work including (but not limited to): Take-home assignments, Dissertations, Theses and Written Project Work, etc., is to be submitted via Turnitin within the established deadline, except for cases where the lecturer explicitly informs students otherwise, due to the graphical or physical content of the assignment (for example, assignments which are not text based and include the creation of an artefact such as drawings, painting, sculpting, model/prototype-building or assignments which include arithmetic), the student is to be instructed to submit the assignment in person. The Lecturer is therefore responsible for identifying suitable tools/methods for verifying the originality of the work submitted as per this policy.
- 5.4. The Turnitin 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 Turnitin is able to show instances of similar text, it does not distinguish between similar text and plagiarism. Hence, the resulting percentage is not to be taken at face value. It is the responsibility of the lecturer to interpret the reports generated by the software and to decide whether such similarity is, in fact, an instance of plagiarism, or not.
- 5.6. The Turnitin Originality Report 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, after consideration of clause 5.5 above, and take the necessary sanctions, as explained in the procedure below.
- 5.7. Lecturers are obliged to address all violations of academic integrity, including raise instances of plagiarism for further action, particularly when malpractice is clearly intentional, extensive, or repeated.

6. Procedure

6.1. Front Sheet

- 6.1.1. All infringements (verified by the IV) and the related assessment decisions are to be recorded by the Assessor in writing on Classter student feedback and where appropriate on the assignment front sheet and/or as annotations on the script.

6.2. Authentication

- 6.2.1. Where deemed appropriate and/or necessary, such as where proof is elusive or evidence is circumstantial, an Authentication Intervention, called by the Deputy Director or Director, which involves the lecturer and IV, is required.
- 6.2.2. The burden of proof lies with the student, i.e., the onus of proving authentication is on the student.
- 6.2.3. Failing to attend the Authentication Intervention results in 0 marks awarded for the related task.



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6.3. Cumulative Record

- 6.3.1. A cumulative record of academic misconduct is to be recorded by the lecturer on Classter.
- 6.3.2. Recurrence of academic misconduct is to be recorded within units and across units.

6.4. Violations/Offence Classification

- 6.4.1. Cases of academic misconduct are classified as per Appendix 1. Appendix 2 lists the sanctions.

6.5. Sanctions

- 6.5.1. A sanction will be applied to cases of academic misconduct according to their category and recurrence (Refer to Appendices 1 and 2).
- 6.5.2. Continued academic misconduct, following a formal warning, will be dealt with by the Institute Disciplinary Board - IDB (Refer to Document 188 College Board Procedures). The IDB can decide whether to assign the student additional sanctions such as, but not limited, to:
 - Capping of unit overall mark at 50%, depending on extent of infringement;
 - Student loses entitlement to a Compensatory Pass;
 - Student loses entitlement to the synoptic;
 - Student fails the unit;
 - Student fails the programme.
- 6.5.3. Sanctions may be applied post-graduation, i.e., in the years following graduation, should a case of academic misconduct be brought to light and proven. In this eventuality, the student will be stripped of the use of all designations, titles, post nominals and/or letters, and the qualification certificate rescinded.

College records, at Institute and Registrar level, will be adjusted accordingly, as MCAST will no longer be in a position to support claims of achievement in such cases.

7. Appeals Procedure

- 7.1. Students have the right to appeal sanctions imposed on them.
- 7.2. Appeals must be submitted, within ten working days of the communication of the sanction/s, to the Institute Appeals Board (IAB) and, in turn, to the MCAST Corporate Appeals Board (MCAB) if student is still not satisfied with the outcome, as described in Doc188.

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: Considerations for Determining Sanctions

For the purposes of this policy, instances of academic misconduct are classified as Minor and Major.

Minor Offences involve errors in judgment without a clear intent by the student to violate academic integrity.

Major Offences are premeditated dishonest acts, including acts that directly affect the grade of other students, and/or repeat offences that show disregard to the policy even after prior experience. These include repeat offences.

The lecturer must also consider whether or not:

- I. The misconduct was premeditated (use of devices, aids and/or notes, access to information etc., that is not permitted);
- II. The impact the action/s potentially had on the student's mark and that of others;
- III. The level/quantity of dishonest activity in which the student engaged;
- IV. The MQF Level of the course.

The lecturer must consider the above and decide if the offence was minor or major. The lecturer can consult with the Deputy Director or Director, if necessary.

All feedback given to students, as a consequence of this Policy and Regulations, must be in writing. Actions that involve sanctions that affect a student's assessment mark must be included in the feedback on Classter with a reference to this Policy and Regulations to justify the sanction/s.

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APPENDIX 2: Sanctions

SANCTIONS	
Levels 1 – 4	Level 5 – 8
<p>Minor Feedback to student by lecturer. Deduct marks for sections that constitute an infringement of these regulations. *Note 1 below</p> <p>Major & any repeat offence Feedback to student by lecturer. Award 0 marks for the task.</p>	<p>Minor Feedback to student by lecturer. Deduct marks for sections that constitute an infringement of these regulations.</p> <p>Major & any repeat offence Feedback to student by lecturer Award 0 marks for the task. Verbal Warning (Doc133) – continued academic misconduct after a formal warning will be dealt with by the IDB.</p>
<p>Note 1: The first instance when Students are formally introduced to citation and referencing competence is at L4. Hence, at Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4, feedback is mostly intended as part of the ‘educational’ process of the student in preparation for higher levels of study, namely, MQF Level 5 and above. The lecturer is allowed to be lenient in the deduction of marks, if this could better serve to motivate the students to submit more original material in their next assignment submission.</p>	



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APPENDIX 3: List of Academic Misconduct and Definitions

Forms of Academic Misconduct

Academic Misconduct constitutes any act (or acts) by which a student gains or attempts to gain unfair advantage, or helps another student cheat in any way, in any of the assessment of the College as part or full fulfilment of a given programme of study. These include, but are not limited to:

- Plagiarism;
- Recycling;
- Research misconduct;
- Dishonesty in publication;
- Abuse of confidentiality;
- Fabrication & falsification of data and/or records;
- Obstruction of activities;
- Improper access and/or obstruction of materials and systems;
- Collusion, including permitting other students to copy; doing work for others, delegation of task/s to others, soliciting to do work for others, etc.;
- Ghosting;
- Obtaining confidential material or information prior to examinations;
- Using notes, books, digital devices or resources, aids or other materials (including but not limited to pre-programming an electronic device to provide solutions) when not permitted;
- Other wilful behaviour with the intent of deceiving assessor/s and/or gaining unfair academic advantage in formal assessment settings.

Definitions of Terms

Plagiarism

Presenting someone else's work as one's own, even with their consent. It is unethical to fail to give recognition to the person who is the true owner of the work. Forms of plagiarism include:

- Copying from published work, minimal or flagrant, 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.
- Submitting another person's work (written, artefact, exhibition visuals, programming code, etc.) without proper citation, commonly referred to as plagiarism.
- Quoted, paraphrased or cited material, which is insufficiently and/or inappropriately referenced.
- Printed/online material, such as, but not limited to, notes, programming code, presentation slides, videos, images, secondary data, etc., without, or with insufficient and/or inappropriately used in-text citations / referencing.
- Representing the words, ideas, or work of others as one's own and failing to give full and proper credit.
- Work that resulted from collaboration with others whose contribution has not been acknowledged.
- Failing to properly acknowledge and cite language from another source, including paraphrased text.
- Failing to properly cite any ideas, images, technical work, creative content, or other material taken from published or unpublished sources in any medium, including online material or oral presentations and the author's own previous work.



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Recycling

The multiple submission of own work/material is not, in itself, considered as academic misconduct, particularly, if the necessity for doing so is declared at the outset. Submission of material that has been submitted on a previous occasion for a different summative assessment is, however, unlikely to be academically appropriate. The merit of such material will therefore be a matter of academic judgement and it may attract fewer (or no) marks than would have been the case if it had not been assessed previously.

Research Misconduct

- Falsification of data, including the dishonest reporting of investigative results: i.e., tampering, manipulating, omitting, selective editing, or altering of laboratory or field data and research notes or records in a way that is deceptive and misrepresents investigative results.
- Fabrication of data, including deception by inventing and misrepresenting laboratory or field data and research notes or records or references.
- Data theft, including taking or using any data, methods, or procedures that are the work or property of others without permission and proper acknowledgment, interfering, inhibiting, or damaging the research of others.
- Misuse of human subjects, including failure to obtain prior review and approval by the proper Institutional Board and failure to safeguard the well-being and private information of persons who participate in research.
- Illegal or unauthorised use of MCAST's resources.
- Material failure to comply with legal requirements governing research.

Dishonesty in Publication

- Knowingly attempting to publish information or research that is false, fabricated, deceptive, or misleading, or contains the plagiarised work of others.
- Attempting to publish work without the permission and full and proper credit of others who have collaborated or contributed to the research and to deny joint authorship, when appropriate.
- The listing as authors of persons who did not contribute to the work.
- Abuse of the peer review process, including: simultaneous submission of a manuscript or abstract to more than one journal without approval from the respective editors; submission of previously published material without clarifying the extent of the previously published material; submission of a manuscript without the permission/agreement of all authors; and, other actions and conflicts of interest that undermine the integrity of the peer review process.

Abuse of Confidentiality

Unauthorised sharing or releasing information of others, including public or private sponsors, concerning ideas, data, research, grant proposals, manuscripts, patent applications, proprietary information, or other projects or activities that were given with the expectation that these would not be disclosed.

Misuse of Computer Facilities

Violations of MCAST's Information Technology Policy for proper use of information resource infrastructure, sharing of information, privacy and security, data management and digital copyright.

Fabrication, Falsification, or Unauthorised Modification of an Academic Record

Altering/attempting to alter the result of an exam or other evaluative assessment, alterations to transcripts, letters of recommendation, or other evaluations by or for any current or former student.

Obstruction of the Academic Activities and Research of Others



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Harassment, intimidation, or tampering with experimental data, research records and notes, written documents, creative products, technical equipment or chemicals, or with any object of study.

Improper Access and/or Obstruction of Materials and Systems

Hiding or destroying materials available to all (e.g., library or course materials), overloading an online or digital system to prevent the completion of an assignment or test, stealing a term paper or test, or improperly obtaining and then selling/distributing a term paper or test.

Collusion

Working with others to cheat in assessment and/or deceive the assessor/s.

Ghosting

Shutting out other people from communication and action, which, in turn, affects their performance in the assessment.

Obtaining Confidential Assessment Material

This could be tantamount to illicit Access/Distribution of College Intellectual Property. Distribution of college intellectual property internally or externally, either independently or through a third party, without the consent of the instructor/author is considered academic misconduct.

Source: Various policies on Academic Integrity across a number of universities and colleges, as well as legal documents/definitions, including:

<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/media/Academic-Misconduct.pdf>

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/exams-and-assessments/academic-integrity/about-academic-misconduct>

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/academic-integrity/Academic-Misconduct-Procedures-v1.0-Sept-18.pdf>

<https://spcollege.libguides.com/c.php?q=254383&p=1695452>



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APPENDIX 4: Plagiarism and How to Avoid It

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 one's work. Where students are not sure whether or not they are committing plagiarism, they may either opt to not use the material or else consult with their lecturer/tutor on the best way to approach the problem.

Students are asked to sign their work prior to submittal to show they have read and understood MCAST's Regulations on Academic Integrity. Academic Integrity regulations and procedures for the respective levels may be accessed via the MCAST website at www.mcast.edu.mt.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

- 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.
- 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.
- 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:
- 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;
- 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;
- Determine whether the information appears unreferenced in a number of credible sources, as then it is most likely to be general knowledge; and,
- 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.
- Avoid procrastination (i.e., leaving your work to the last minute). Panic may lead you to plagiarism to finish on time.

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.



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APPENDIX 5: Reference Styles by Institute/Centre

Institute/Centre	Reference Style	
Institute of Business Management and Commerce	APA	
Institute of Applied Sciences	Harvard	
<i>Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences</i>		
<i>B.Sc (HONS) in Nursing (Homegrown)</i>	APA	
Institute of Community Services	Harvard, APA	
Institute of Information Communication and Technology	IEEE	
Institute for the Creative Arts	Harvard	
Institute of Engineering and Transport	IEEE	
<i>Centre for Maritime Studies</i>		
<i>Aviation Maintenance and Training Centre</i>		
<i>Building and Construction Engineering</i>		
<i>Mechanical Engineering</i>		
<i>Electrical and Electronics Engineering</i>		
<i>Auto</i>		
Gozo Campus	<i>IICT Courses</i>	IEEE
	<i>Engineering Courses</i>	IEEE
	<i>Other Courses</i>	APA

Table for Referencing Styles by Institute/Centre

Students/Researchers are required to refer to their Assessor/ Dissertation Tutor/ Dissertation Supervisor for the referencing style applied at their institute.

Different referencing systems used in academic writing

Referencing plays a major part in the academic writing process. Writing assignments and dissertations requires thorough research on the topic. At certain points, the writer may need to refer to an idea or a quote/sentence from another author. However, providing another writer's piece of work as your own is prohibited and is a form of plagiarism. Hence, it is vital to provide reference to the work of others that you have quoted or referred to in your writing. Some of the more commonly used referencing systems when writing assignments are listed below.

Harvard – This style of referencing is mainly used among students studying in universities. The Harvard referencing style includes two types of citations;

- in-text citations: used when quoting from a source directly.
- reference list: available at the end of the assignment/dissertation giving a full description of the sources used when writing the document.

APA – This is a reference style founded by the American Psychological Association. Hence, the reason for its name APA. This method also has two types of citations, namely in-text citations and reference lists.

IEEE – The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) referencing style is used in the publications related to electronics, computer and technology. Hence, it is more of a technical form of referencing style. This style is also used among students studying in the fields of Electronics and Information Technology.

The method involves in-text references, where the

- references are numbered according to the order they appear in the document and reference list, and



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- full details of the references are stated at the end of the document.





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APPENDIX 6: Flowchart for the Handling of Academic Offences

