

ONCAMPUS Academic Offences Policy

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Introduction

An academic offence is defined as “any attempt, whether successful or unsuccessful, to achieve an unfair advantage in any element of assessment over other candidates participating in the assessment”. They are categorised as plagiarism, contract cheating, collusion, translation, examination offences and other offences.

This policy may apply to any piece of work or examination submitted for formal assessment towards a programme at ONCAMPUS. The purpose of this policy is to ensure equity of treatment for all students alleged to have committed an assessment offence, to establish a clear and progressive process of penalties and define when each is appropriate.

ONCAMPUS policies are in line with the QQI NAIN initiative - <https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/engagement-insights-and-knowledge-sharing/national-academic-integrity-network>.

For coursework submissions, all students are required to complete the Coursework

Submission Declaration to declare that all work submitted is their own. This must be uploaded before the first summative piece of work and covers all work submitted during their programme of study.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined by ONCAMPUS as “the submission for assessment of material (written, visual or oral) without correct acknowledgement, in such a way that the work could be assumed to be the student’s own, or could be assumed to have been originally produced by the student for the purposes of the assessment in question, where this is not the case.” This could take the form of incorrectly referenced material or work of others copied directly from another source.

Plagiarism includes:

- the unattributed use of another person’s work, ideas, opinions, theory, statistics, graphs, models, paintings, artefacts, performance, computer code, drawings, quotations of another person’s actual spoken or written words, or paraphrases of another person’s spoken or written words;
- the submission of unattributed work previously produced by the student towards some other assessment, or published in some other forum;
- work previously submitted to any institution (including ONCAMPUS) for assessment at ONCAMPUS;
- a student who knowingly assists another student to plagiarise (for example by willingly giving them their own work to copy from).

It is accepted that not all cases of plagiarism are committed intentionally, and that it is not appropriate to invoke the formal processes within this policy for all cases. Where, in the judgement of the marker, a student has committed a minor act of plagiarism for which the formal processes are not appropriate, a marker may:

- **reduce the mark for the element of assessment relative to the scale of the offence;**
- **award a mark of zero for the element of assessment in question;**
- **issue an informal warning.**

Records of informal warnings should be kept in Centre as any allegation of plagiarism against a student who has already received an informal warning should be dealt with under the formal provisions of this policy. When a mark reduction is applied, this must be clearly shown in the feedback and on the marker forms.

Contract Cheating

Contract cheating is when a third party (e.g. essay-writing service) receives payment to

produce work on a student's behalf. Even if this work is original i.e. it is not flagged as plagiarised, submitting work written by others is an academic offence.

Collusion

Collusion is committed when a piece of work is produced with the assistance of another person, or persons, where the assignment is to be undertaken and completed by a student working individually. This includes cases where two or more students submit work for assessment that is identical in its entirety or in substantial parts. It also includes cases where help has been given to improve the style of written language in the work submitted, although help with basic proof-reading for typographical and grammatical errors is normally permitted.

Translation

Where student work may have been directly translated from their first language, using an online translator or translation app, this constitutes an academic offence. ONCAMPUS expects students to be able to discuss the content of their work in English as students are preparing to complete a degree in English.

Translated work often features:

- unnatural word order;
- obscure vocabulary that appears awkward in context;
- poor readability.

Examination Offences

Examination offences occur when exam procedures and regulations, which have been communicated to students, are not followed. These may include but are not limited to:

- removal of examination scripts or other material (whether completed or not) from an examination room i.e. rough paper, formulae sheets, case studies;
- use of any material or stationery that is not permitted for the given examination;
- failure to surrender any unauthorised materials or aids taken into the examination room (whether used or not) upon the request of the invigilator;
- failure to acknowledge or respond appropriately to an invigilator's warning regarding behaviour (e.g. repeatedly looking away from screen in proctored online exam, intentionally positioning camera away from face/desk)
- communicating or passing information to other candidate(s) during an examination;
- attempting to copy work from other candidate(s);
- candidates shall not obtain, or attempt to obtain, access to the examination room or papers prior to the start of the examination, until instructed to do so;

- candidates may not attempt to tamper with examination scripts or coursework after they have been submitted;
- candidates may not attempt to add to or amend examination scripts after they have been instructed to cease writing during or at the end of an examination.

Other Offences

Other offences that may be considered as an academic offence may include, but are not limited to:

- the inclusion of unauthorised members in student teams conducting group work assignments;
- being party to any arrangement which, if enacted, would constitute a breach of the regulations.

Academic Offences Procedure

Stage 1 – Centre Based Investigation

Allegations of academic offence that are not considered “minor” and cannot be dealt with through the judgement of the marker, should be heard under Stage 1 of this policy. Such offences may include, but are not limited to:

- substantial copying of paragraphs (without acknowledging sources);
- using the internet to download essays from ‘cheat sites’ which are subsequently identified by plagiarism-detection software;
- copying much/all of the work of a fellow student;
- paying others to complete work i.e. ‘contracting’ assessments externally;
- allegations of plagiarism in multiple pieces of coursework submitted by a student;
- collusion, use of translation websites/apps, and other offences.

If after the judgement of the marker prior to Stage 1, the student disputes the academic offence penalty, Stage 1 of this policy can also be implemented.

Panel

Where a case is dealt with under Stage 1, the Centre Head/Director or Deputy Centre Head/Head of Learning and Teaching will nominate a panel consisting of a minimum of two academic members of staff to consider the case. The panel should not consist of any member of staff associated with the allegation or any previous investigation involving the student concerned. In cases of suspected contract cheating, or where the source of plagiarised material is neither found by software/the marker nor admitted by the student, the panel will assess whether the student(s) are able to adequately demonstrate understanding of the work they have submitted through the viva process. The judgement of

the panel is regarded as evidence in determining the final outcome of each case. The viva record form must be completed and kept in Centre as a record of the viva process, and the evidence recorded may be used as evidence of academic misconduct, including when the original source of plagiarised material cannot be found by other means. Students will be given ample opportunities to discuss and explain the content of their submitted work, and the panel will account for difficulties posed by English language levels in all cases. The student will be informed of the allegation and investigation, reminded of the declaration they have acknowledged on the Coursework Submission Declaration, and will receive copies of any evidence to be used to support the allegation. The student will then be offered the opportunity to make representations to the panel. Where a student does not attend a previously agreed meeting, the investigation will continue and may be concluded in their absence. The marker may make a recommendation to the panel on an appropriate penalty; however the panel is not obliged to implement the recommendation, even if the allegation is upheld.

The panel may wish to consider the following in determining the appropriate penalty:

- intent to deceive, either through the offence committed or during the investigation;
- scale of the offence;
- previous history of the student;
- whether or not there is admission of the offence.

Where the finding is that no offence has been committed, or there is no clear intent to deceive, the panel may determine that no further action be taken.

Where the finding is that an offence has been committed, the panel may determine:

- a) that no further action be taken **IF** the panel is satisfied that appropriate action has already been taken by the marker(s);
- b) that the mark be reduced relative to the scale of the offence **AND** that a formal warning be issued;
- c) that a mark of zero (0%) be awarded for the element of assessment in question **AND** that a formal warning be issued;
- d) that a mark of zero (0%) be awarded for the module of which the element of assessment formed a part **AND** that a formal warning be issued.

In all cases of confirmed academic offence, the resubmission/resit of the assessment in question must be capped at the ONCAMPUS pass mark (40%).

The panel will inform the student of its decision within 10 working days of the panel meeting. In addition to the above, the student may be asked to undertake specific tuition in relation to plagiarism or seek guidance from a member of academic staff.

Where the panel are unable to come to a clear decision or consider that the offence potentially merits a more severe penalty than can be authorised under Stage 1 of this policy, then the alleged offence will be dealt with under Stage 2. If after the judgement of the panel at Stage 1, the student disputes the academic offence penalty, Stage 2 of this policy can be implemented.

Stage 2 – ONCAMPUS Academic Board Investigation

Where an alleged offence is considered to be of such a serious nature that it would not be possible to apply an appropriate penalty under Stage 1 of this policy were the allegation to be upheld, then a written request from the Centre for formal Stage 2 proceedings should be made to the Chief Academic Officer. Such a request should also be made where it is a student's third or more offence.

A Stage 2 panel will be convened to consider an alleged academic offence (typically formed of relevant members from the Central Academic Team). Upon investigation, where the finding is that no offence has been committed, or there is no clear intent to deceive, the panel may determine that no further action be taken.

Where the finding is that an offence has been committed, the panel may apply one or more of the following sanctions:

- a) that no further action be taken **IF** the panel is satisfied that appropriate action has already been taken in Stage 1;
- b) that the mark be reduced relative to the scale of the offence **AND** that a formal warning be issued;
- c) that the student resubmits the assessment **AND** that a formal warning be issued;
- d) that a mark of zero (0%) be awarded for the element of assessment in question **AND** that a formal warning be issued;
- e) that the student is suspended from attendance at ONCAMPUS and/or using ONCAMPUS facilities and/or undertaking any further assessments for a stated period of time **AND** that a formal warning be issued;
- f) that the student's registration and enrolment be terminated immediately and the student is not awarded any award that they would otherwise have been entitled to.

In all cases of confirmed academic offence, the resubmission/resit of the assessment in question must be capped at the ONCAMPUS pass mark (40%).

Any appeal against a decision made under Stage 2 of this policy should be heard according to the ONCAMPUS Academic Appeals Policy.

Recording of Offences

Where an allegation of an academic offence has been made and the case is being investigated, the Examination Board should defer a decision on the student's progression or classification until the investigation is completed.

Any penalty imposed as a result of an academic offence should be internally recorded by the Centre. Student's academic transcripts do not include reference to academic offences, whether proven or otherwise; transcripts solely provide details on the final marks awarded for modules taken.

The centre will provide an annual report to submit to the awarding body Faculty Board on any suspected breaches of assessment regulations, for example how many cases were reported, how many were upheld, what were the penalties given, etc.

Assessment offence after a mark or module result has been assigned or an award been made

If evidence of an academic offence is produced after a mark has been awarded, the mark, module result or an entire award can be revoked.

Consideration of whether to revoke a mark, module or programme mark as a result of an assessment offence should be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of Stage 2 of this policy. The result of the panel should be communicated to the Chair of the Examination Board; where a decision is made to revoke a programme award.