

Academic Honesty and Misconduct Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

The policy provides a framework for upholding academic integrity and honesty, and detecting and managing academic misconduct at the Australian Performing Arts Conservatory (The Conservatory).

This policy applies to all members of The Conservatory's higher education community.

2. Objectives

This policy outlines:

- strategies to promote academic honesty
- mechanisms to detect plagiarism and/or 'contract cheating'
- processes for academic misconduct

The Conservatory is committed to ensuring that academic honesty is integral to its values, and that it produces ethical graduates. The Conservatory expects all staff and students to act with integrity and honesty when developing, creating and using information and ideas, and to conduct themselves with the highest ethical standards in all aspects of academic work. In particular, The Conservatory expects that:

- staff and students ensure that their academic work is their own original work;
- the ideas of others are acknowledged appropriately.

3. Implementation

The Academic Board will ensure that mechanisms are in place to safeguard the reputation of The Conservatory, its staff and graduates. The Conservatory will be vigilant in maintaining academic integrity and will aim to eliminate plagiarism and/or contract cheating. The Conservatory will:

- expect all staff and students to undertake all academic work honestly;
- promote academic honesty by distributing policies and information to the Conservatory's higher education community;
- encourage students to engage in ethical learning and scholarship practices;
- monitor academic work and apply fair processes to deal with academic misconduct, including plagiarism and/or contract cheating.

4. Procedure

4.1. Academic Integrity for Students

The Conservatory will use text matching software or employ other means to detect plagiarism, where appropriate. Academic staff will be vigilant in detecting plagiarism and/or contract cheating will use professional judgement and fair and transparent processes to determine instances of plagiarism and/or contract cheating, and if it is intentional or unintentional.

Students will be provided written advice during enrolment that plagiarism mechanisms, including software, may be used to detect plagiarism, and students will be required to acknowledge their awareness of these practices. Students are responsible for:

- understanding academic honesty and misconduct and avoiding unethical practices

- ensuring that their academic work is their own, and for appropriately acknowledging the work and ideas of others

4.2. Submitting assignments

Student assessments are all subject to this policy, and when students submit any piece of work they:

- must declare that the work is their own work, or the work of the group
- acknowledge that student discipline processes may be enacted in cases of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism or contract cheating.

All student assessment cover sheets will contain the following wording:

Academic work submitted may be subjected to plagiarism detection mechanisms. Copies of students' work may be retained for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in the future.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the reproduction of someone else's words, ideas or findings and presenting them as one's own ideas without proper acknowledgement and includes:

- Direct copying or paraphrasing from someone else's published work (either electronic or hard copy) without acknowledging the source (or authors)
- Using facts, information and ideas derived from a source without acknowledgement
- Assisting another person to commit an act of plagiarism
- Submitting a paper to be graded or reviewed that you have not written on your own
- Copying answers or text from another classmate and submit it as your own
- Citing data without crediting the original source
- 'Reworking' data from another source (such as another student's research data) without acknowledgement or to pass it off as your work
- Proposing another author's idea as if it were your own
- Submitting someone else's presentation, program, spreadsheet, or other file with only minor alterations

Intentional and Unintentional Plagiarism

The seriousness of the misconduct is determined, in part, by whether the conduct is regarded as intentional or unintentional. Intentional plagiarism is carried out knowingly with an intent to deceive, and is therefore considered as serious misconduct. Unintentional plagiarism may occur due to lack of familiarity with academic writing practices, and is therefore considered to be less serious at the first occurrence.

Contract Cheating

Contract cheating is taken to include producing assignments (required explicitly or implicitly to be independently produced) in collaboration with and/or using the work of other people.

It also includes cheating in examinations or tests by:

- copying or attempting to copy from another student (or external party)
- attempting to use unauthorised material either in written or electronic format
- verbally communicating with another student or attempting to communicate with another student, fabricating information, data, research or other elements

Falsifying information

- Fabricating references or using incorrect references
- Falsifying lab or experimental data or observations

Levels and Penalties for Student Academic Misconduct

Students studying higher education for the first time may make small errors as part of their academic learning process. These errors do not constitute academic misconduct if the relevant unit coordinator believes that this is part of the regular learning process.

Factors

Academic staff will take into account relevant factors to determine the level of misconduct and the seriousness of the academic misconduct, such as:

- The knowledge and experience of the student
- The type of misconduct
- Whether the misconduct was intentional or unintentional
- Whether the misconduct has occurred before

Level of Misconduct

The level of academic misconduct has been divided into three categories to assist with determining the appropriate penalty.

Level 1 – minor

The conduct is assessed as being unintentional and due to lack of knowledge or experience. Examples include plagiarism of less than 10% due to poor referencing and using paraphrasing that is too close to the original; copying of a few sentences without referencing.

Level 2 – moderate

The conduct is assessed as being possibly unintentional or intentional; the student should have sufficient knowledge and experience to understand academic misconduct, but only constitutes a moderate breach rather than a major breach. Examples include moderate plagiarism of between 10-25%, other than a thesis; fabricating or falsifying data in an assessment other than a thesis; colluding with other students and submitting work as individual work, other than group work that has been stated as acceptable.

Level 3 – major

The conduct is assessed as being intentional and constitutes a serious and substantial breach. Examples include cheating in examinations; major plagiarism of more than 25%, particularly in a thesis; fabricating or falsifying data in a thesis.

Penalties

Penalties should take into account the level of academic misconduct and the factors. In particular, the experience of the student and whether academic misconduct has occurred before, should be taken into account when determining the penalty.

The decision-makers for academic misconduct are:

- Level 1 – Course Coordinator (in conjunction with lecturer)
- Level 2 – Director of Higher Education
- Level 3 – Academic Board

The available penalties may include one or more of the following:

- A student warning
- Requirement for the student to undertake learning support or counselling
- Resubmission of the assessment item or undertaking supplementary assessment, with maximum achievement of a pass grade
- Requirement to undertake another form of examination, which has improved integrity
- Reduction in the marks allocated to the relevant assessment component consistent with the level of academic misconduct

- A mark of zero allocated to the assessment item
- A fail grade applied to the unit
- Exclusion from the course
- Withdrawal of a conferred award

Procedures for Student Academic Misconduct

The following procedure will be undertaken:

- Where academic misconduct is suspected, the academic staff such as lecturer or examiner first determines the level of misconduct, together with any evidence, such as the relevant assignment.
- The academic staff should refer the matter to the Course Coordinator, who should decide to either take remedial action or to further refer this matter to the Director of Higher Education within seven (7) working days.
- The student's record will be checked to determine if there have been any other instances of academic misconduct recorded.
- The decision-maker conducts an initial investigation of the allegation.
- The student is invited via email and by formal letter to attend a meeting with the Director of Higher Education to discuss the issue, and may bring a support person. The notice will advise the student to respond in writing to the allegation within 14 working days.
- The Director of Higher Education receives a copy of all correspondence regarding the alleged academic misconduct.
- If the student does not respond within the 14 day timeframe, the decision-maker makes a decision on whether a penalty will be imposed; defines the penalty; and determines if any supports are required.
- If academic misconduct is determined to have occurred, supported by the evidence collected, the following penalties may be applied:
 - In the case of Level 1 minor academic misconduct, the student may simply be issued with a warning and/or some marks may be deducted for the assessment in question.
 - In the case of Level 2 moderate academic misconduct, marks may be deducted for the assessment, or a mark of zero may be awarded for the assessment in question.
 - In the case of Level 3 major academic misconduct, a mark of zero may be awarded for the assessment and/or the whole project.
 - In the case where multiple instances of academic misconduct have been committed by a student, the Director of Higher Education may refer the matter to the Academic Board which has the right to expel the student. If a decision for expulsion is made, then all fees paid by the student to date will be forfeited and the student will not be allowed to continue with their course or seek a refund.
- A formal notice of the decision is sent to the student together with information outlining their right to appeal the decision.
- Copies of the notice and subsequent actions are sent to relevant administrative and academic personnel to ensure that the allegation and decision is recorded on the student's file, and assessments are adjusted accordingly, where relevant.

4.3. Appeals

A student who has been assessed as having committed an act of misconduct can appeal the penalty decision in the following ways:

- A written appeal to the Director of Higher Education (Level 1) or Academic Board (Level 2 or 3) dependent on the level of the academic misconduct.

- If the first option fails, then an appeal can be made, in writing, to the Academic Board, and it will make a decision; or to the Governance Board if the Academic Board made the initial decision.
- If a student is still unhappy with the decision, they may make an appeal to an external party, such as:
 - An academic member of staff based in a local university or in the country in which the student resides, who can mediate or arbitrate.

Students should refer to the Student Grievance Policy for details of the appeals process.

4.4. Academic Integrity for Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- maintaining high ethical standards in conducting research and scholarly activities, within the guidelines of the Academic Freedom and Ethical Conduct Policy
- promoting academic integrity and honesty amongst students
- monitoring and detecting student academic misconduct
- reporting academic misconduct to a senior member of academic staff

Staff Academic Misconduct

Matters of alleged staff academic misconduct should be promptly reported to the Director of Higher Education. If the Director of Higher Education determines that there may be a case of academic misconduct, then the matter should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer, together with a report on the alleged misconduct.

Process

- The Chief Executive Officer will commence an investigation of the matter, and may appoint other persons to assist with the investigation.
- The staff member shall be notified in writing, of the allegations made against them, including any evidence. The staff member will be given 14 days to provide a response to the allegations, including the provision of evidence to counter the allegation.
- The Chief Executive Officer will arrange for a meeting to be held between the staff member, the Chief Executive Officer, the Director of Higher Education, and a member from the Academic Board. The staff member may bring a representative who is not a practising lawyer or barrister.
- The Chief Executive Officer will ensure that any new information is promptly provided to all parties for consideration and response.

On completion of the investigation, the Chief Executive Officer will prepare a report to the Academic Board outlining:

- findings
- evidence
- conclusions
- recommendations

The Academic Board will consider the report and make a decision whether to:

- take no further action
- request further information from any of the parties
- take disciplinary action

4.5. Appeals

If the staff member is not satisfied with the decision, he/she may seek an appeal as outlined in the Staff Grievance Policy.

5. Definitions

Academic Integrity: Demonstrating the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in all academic endeavours, including preparing and presenting work for assessment as part of coursework or research.

Academic Literacy: The capacity to undertake study and research, and to communicate findings and knowledge in a manner appropriate to the particular disciplinary conventions and scholarly standards expected at a higher education level.

Academic Misconduct: Any activity or practice including but not limited to cheating in any assessments, plagiarism, unauthorised collusion, fraudulent or unethical research and scholarship practices.

Contract Cheating: TEQSA defines contract cheating as: *'...when students outsource their assessments to a third party, whether that is a commercial provider, current or former student, family member or acquaintance. It includes the unauthorised use of file-sharing sites, as well as organising another person to take an examination'* (Source: <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/what-contract-cheating-and-methods-reduce-it>)

Ethics: The guiding values, principles and standards that enable people to determine how things should be done and how they should act. Ethics refers to the judgements that people make and the process that determines those judgements. It is the process by which people make value based decisions which ultimately guides their actions and behaviours.

Plagiarism: Using another person's ideas, designs, words or works without appropriate acknowledgement.

6. Related Documents

The following policies and procedures are related to this policy:

- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Grievance Policy
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Academic Freedom and Ethical Conduct Policy

7. Review

Three years from commencement.

8. Accountabilities

The Academic Board is responsible for review and approval of this policy.

The policy is to be implemented via induction and training of staff and distribution to students and the Conservatory's higher education community via the website and other publications.

9. Revision History

Approval Authority	Contact Person	Revision Due Date	Revision Date	Approved Date	Version No.	Revision Description
Academic Board	Chair	01/07/19		18/12/15	1	New document
Academic Board	Chair	14/07/23	14/07/20	14/07/20	2.0	
Academic Board	Chair		12/07/21		2.01	Version until approved – Contract Cheating Added.
Academic Board	Chair	23/07/24		23/07/21	3.0	