

Academic Honesty and Misconduct Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

The Australian Performing Arts Conservatory (APAC) Academic Honesty Policy and Procedure is designed to support academic quality, to protect APAC's academic reputation, to foster good practice and to drive compliance with mandated higher education standards.

1.1. Purpose

The intent of this document is to set out APAC's framework for ensuring academic honesty and effectively managing academic misconduct, in a manner compliant with mandated higher education standards and which fosters good practice.

1.2. Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to APAC students and staff.

1.3. Principles

- APAC fosters a whole of institution culture in which academic honesty is respected, valued and upheld;
- academic honesty is a collective responsibility of the APAC community and APAC educates students and staff about academic honesty and the behaviours it requires;
- academic honesty is supported, and opportunities for breaches of academic honesty are minimised, through the policies and procedures framework, through the appropriate design of units and assessment items, through assessment standards, through the modelling of appropriate behaviours, and through student and staff support systems;
- improving and enhancing students' understanding of academic honesty and the behaviours it requires is a key feature in their orientation and transition, and is consolidated through continuing education over the duration of their course;
- allegations of breaches of academic honesty will be dealt with expeditiously, and investigations will be fair, transparent, accord with principles of natural justice, and appropriately respect the privacy of those involved;
- a breach of academic integrity may be characterised as academic misconduct and dealt with under policies and procedures relating to misconduct.
- the response to a student's first breach of academic integrity will be more educative than punitive; and
- APAC's approach to academic honesty is regularly reviewed and tested against external reference points.

2. Policy Statements

2.1. Academic Honesty, Standards and Quality

APAC is committed to facilitating the development of theoretical knowledge and of excellence in performance and practice. APAC honours this commitment within a broad framework which ensures that its academic operations are of high quality and embed high academic standards.

A key component of this framework is APAC's commitment to a whole of institution culture in which academic honesty is respected, valued and upheld. APAC's expectation is that all members of its academic community exhibit the values from which academic honesty derives: truthfulness, trustworthiness, openness, transparency, fairness, respect and responsibility.

A culture of academic honesty supports APAC's academic reputation and contributes to the future success of its students.

2.2. Mitigating Academic Risk

Potential breaches of academic honesty pose a key area of academic risk, including risk to academic standards. APAC has mechanisms in place to appropriately mitigate this risk. Educating students and staff about academic honesty is a key element in student orientations, transition activities, student support, course information, unit outlines, the Student Handbook, modules available through the Learning Management System, staff inductions, and staff development.

Curriculum design, including the design of assessment, mitigates this risk by minimising opportunities for breaches of academic honesty and by building in activities that develop and enhance students' understanding of academic honesty and the behaviours, actions and conduct it demands. In their teaching of the curriculum and through the unit materials they develop, academic staff model those behaviours, actions and conduct.

Risk is also mitigated through systems for the effective detection and management of breaches of academic honesty, with responses to breaches having an educative aspect, particularly in cases of a student's first breach, as well as a punitive element. More generally, APAC's framework of policies and procedures, including the implementation of this Policy and Procedure, plays a significant role in mitigating risk.

2.3. Review and External Reference Points

Academic risk resulting from potential breaches of academic honesty is prevalent in educational settings; approaches to mitigation are discussed, explored, developed, researched and refined across the sector; and regulatory agencies are proactive in both educating stakeholders about academic dishonesty and intervening directly to prevent it.

The participation of APAC staff in collaborative sector-led activities which maintain the currency of their knowledge about effective ways of discouraging, detecting and managing breaches of academic dishonesty will be encouraged by APAC.

APAC's approach to academic honesty is also regularly reviewed, utilising feedback from students and staff, advice from external experts, and benchmarking with processes and practices at other institutions.

Issues regarding compliance or academic standards identified in the review process, including issues concerning the proper application of this Policy and Procedure, are expeditiously addressed. Identified opportunities for improvement are considered and pursued where feasible.

2.4. Complaints and Appeals

Enrolled students of APAC may lodge a complaint or appeal if they are dissatisfied with any aspect of APAC's decision-making on academic honesty assessments or breaches through the complaints and appeals process outlined in the Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure.

3. Procedure

3.1. Academic Honesty: Students

Students are provided with on-going written and verbal advice regarding the behaviours, actions and conduct that breach academic honesty. This written and verbal advice is provided in orientation and transition activities, through unit outlines, unit materials, in class, in the Student Handbook and in a stand-alone Academic Integrity module on Moodle. They are advised also of APAC's approach to detecting breaches, including through the use of text-matching software, to managing breaches, and of the consequences for student of committing breaches.

3.1.1. Kinds of Academic Dishonesty

APAC endeavours to detect, and appropriately respond to, all types of academic dishonesty. These include:

- plagiarism, which is submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own, and without acknowledging, citing or referencing the original source of the work;
- recycling, which is submitting work that is one's own, but which has already been assessed, and failing to clearly indicate this;
- fabrication, which is making up information, such as experimental or interview data, inventing sources of data, citing publications that one knows, or reasonably should know, to be incorrect or that don't exist;
- collusion, which is engaging in illegitimate cooperation with other students to complete assessment tasks that are meant to be done individually;
- cheating in exams, such as by writing notes on one's body or materials taken into the exam room, copying from other students, communicating with other students or people outside the exam room while the exam is in progress, using electronic devices to access information related to the exam while the exam is in progress, or bringing prohibited items, such as unapproved calculators or textbooks into the exam room;
- contract cheating, which is illegal commercial cheating where one pays someone else, or one accepts payment from someone else, to complete part or all of an assessment item;
- offering bribes or inducements to gain an academic advantage, and accepting bribes or inducement to give an academic advantage; and

- providing false information or fraudulent documentation, such as academic transcripts and medical certificates, to gain an academic advantage.

3.1.2. Levels of, and Penalties for, Student Academic Misconduct

APAC's approach to academic misconduct allows that some breaches of academic honesty have more to do with students being insufficiently aware of academic practices and conventions.

Plagiarism, for example, is a breach of academic honesty and is academic misconduct. However, the seriousness of the misconduct is determined, in part, by whether the conduct is intentional or unintentional. Intentional plagiarism involves an intent to deceive, and is therefore serious misconduct. Unintentional plagiarism involves no intention to deceive and may occur due to lack of familiarity with academic practices and conventions, and the specific requirements academic honesty.

At its first occurrence unintentional plagiarism is not serious academic misconduct and the appropriate response is educative not punitive.

Factors

In determining the level of academic misconduct, academic staff will take into account relevant factors such as:

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

Levels of Misconduct

There are three levels of academic misconduct, with each level having appropriate responses or penalties.

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% of an assignment due to poor referencing or using paraphrasing that is too close to the original and unacknowledged or copying of a few sentences without referencing.

Level 2 – Moderate

The conduct is assessed as being intentional or, if unintentional, more extensive than is reasonably allowable in virtue of insufficient understanding of academic practice and conventions; Examples include moderate plagiarism of between 10-25%; fabricating or falsifying data in an assessment other than a thesis; colluding with other students and submitting work as individual work.

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%; fabricating or falsifying data in a thesis.

3.1.3. Investigating Suspected Academic Misconduct and Determining Penalties

- i. The decision-makers for investigating suspected academic misconduct and determining penalties are as follows:
 - Level 1 – Head of Discipline (HoD);
 - Level 2 – Director of Higher Education (DoHE);
 - Level 3 – Investigated by a Committee that will be convened by the CEO. The Committee includes the CEO, Student Administration, and where deemed necessary, relevant students and staff.
- ii. Where an academic staff member suspects academic misconduct they must refer the matter to the relevant HoD, along with a provisional assessment of the Level of misconduct and all relevant evidence and background information.
- iii. The student's record is checked to determine if there have been any other instances of academic misconduct recorded.
- iv. The HoD's decide on the basis of the evidence, the background information, and the record of academic misconduct, to either take remedial action or to refer the matter to the DoHE, within seven (7) working days.
- v. The student is then invited via email and by formal letter to attend a meeting with the DoHE to discuss the issue. This communication advises the student to respond in writing to the allegation within twenty (20) working days and advises that they may bring a support person to the meeting.
- vi. If the student does not respond within the twenty (20) working day timeframe, the DoHE makes a decision whether a penalty will be imposed, determines the penalty; and determines if academic or counselling support is required.
- vii. If the student does respond in writing and attends the meeting with the DoHE, then the DoHE takes into account the written response and the meeting discussion in deciding whether a penalty will be imposed, determines the penalty; and determines if academic or counselling support is required.
- viii. 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 be issued with a warning, or some marks may be deducted for the assessment.
 - 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 the case of Level 3 (major) academic misconduct, a mark of zero may be awarded for the assessment or for the unit.
 - The Committee will decide on whether disciplinary action should be taken based on evidence and any documented compassionate or compelling circumstances. This could include cancellation of enrolment.
 - Potential outcomes for substantiated breaches are, but not limited to:
 - Written Warning;
 - Suspension from Class;
 - Request for Apology;
 - Referral to Counselling;
 - Student Monitoring;
 - Mediation;
 - Removal from class with supervision from another APAC staff member, other than the lecturer;
 - Cancellation of Enrolment.
- ix. In cases where multiple instances of academic misconduct have been committed, the DoHE may refer the matter to the Academic Board, which may suspend the student's enrolment or expel the student from APAC. Further, no fees paid by a student relating to a period where the student's enrolment is suspended as a result of misconduct are refundable or repayable to the student, and no fees paid by a student are refundable or repayable to the student where the student is expelled from APAC.
- x. A formal notice of the decision is sent to the student together with information outlining their right to appeal the decision under APAC's Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure.

For international students, this formal notice to either suspend or cancel their enrolment must advise an intention to either suspend or cancel their enrolment; the detailed reasons for this decision; advice to seek advice from the Department of Home Affairs on the potential impact on their visa of either suspension or cancellation of enrolment; and of their right to appeal this decision within twenty (20) working days from the date the intention to suspend or cancel has been received.

- xi. Copies of the notice and subsequent actions are sent to relevant administrative and academic staff to ensure that the details of the decision are recorded on the student's file, and assessment results are adjusted where relevant. All documentation relating the investigation is retained in a secure place for a period of at least seven (7) years.

3.1.4. Appeals

A student who is dissatisfied with decisions resulting from an academic misconduct investigation and the resultant penalty may appeal those decisions as follows:

- A written appeal to the DoHE regarding decisions made by a HoD. If that appeal is unsuccessful, they may then appeal in writing to the Academic Board.

- A written appeal to the Academic Board regarding decisions made by the DoHE. If that appeal is unsuccessful, they may then appeal in writing to the Board of Directors.
- A written appeal to the Board of Directors regarding decisions made by the Academic Board.
- Once internal avenues for appeal are exhausted, a student who still dissatisfied may make an appeal to an external agency, such as Queensland Ombudsman.

3.2. Academic Honesty: Staff

3.2.1. Reporting and Investigating Academic Misconduct

- i. Staff are responsible for:
 - maintaining high ethical standards in conducting research and scholarly activities, within the parameters of the *Academic Freedom and Ethical Conduct Policy*;
 - promoting academic honesty with the APAC community, including educating students about the behaviours, actions and conduct required by academic honesty;
 - detecting and reporting suspected student academic misconduct;
 - reporting suspected staff academic misconduct to the DoHE or, if the suspicion concerns the DoHE, then to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- ii. Suspected staff academic misconduct should be promptly reported to the DoHE, along with all relevant evidence.
- iii. If the DoHE determines that there may be a case of academic misconduct, then the matter is referred to the CEO, together with a report on, and all relevant evidence regarding, the suspected misconduct.
- iv. The CEO commences an investigation of the matter, and may appoint other persons to assist with the investigation.
- v. The staff member suspected of academic misconduct is notified in writing, of the allegations made against them and provide with all evidence relevant to the allegation. The staff member will be given twenty (20) working days to provide a response to the allegation, including any evidence to counter the allegation.
- vi. The CEO will arrange a meeting with the staff member, along with the DoHE and a member from the Academic Board, to discuss the allegation and the relevant evidence. The staff member may bring a support person who is not a practising lawyer or barrister.
- vii. On the basis of the discussion and all evidence provided, the CEO will determine if further evidence should be sought. If the CEO so decides, and further evidence is obtained, it will be expeditiously provided to the parties referred to in vi. Above, who will reconvene to discuss that evidence.

- viii. On the basis of the discussion and all evidence provided, the Chief Executive Officer will prepare a report for the Academic Board detailing:
- findings;
 - evidence;
 - conclusions; and
 - recommendations;
- ix. The Academic Board will consider the report and make a decision to:
- take no further action;
 - request further information from any relevant party; or
 - take disciplinary action.
- x. All documentation relating the investigation is retained in a secure place for a period of at least seven (7) years.

3.2.2. Appeals

A staff member who is dissatisfied with decisions resulting from an academic misconduct investigation and the resultant penalty may appeal those decisions under the *Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure*.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- monitor and oversee formal complaints, allegations of misconduct, appeals processes for non-academic matters, breaches of academic or research integrity and critical incidents.
- assuring itself that there is an effective system in place for ensuring academic honesty on the part of students and staff and an effective system in place which for managing student and staff academic misconduct, which are compliant with mandated standards, and which exemplify good practice; and
- considering, where required, referrals for decision and written appeals regarding the outcomes of academic misconduct investigations and associated penalties.

4.2. The Academic Board

The Academic Board is responsible for:

- maintain oversight of academic integrity, including the monitoring of breaches and processes and mechanisms to mitigate potential and actual academic risks, including biannual reports of academic risks to the Quality and Risk Management Committee.
- considering, where required, referrals for decision and written appeals regarding the outcomes of academic misconduct investigations and associated penalties.

4.3. The Director of Higher Education

The DoHE is responsible for:

- implementing this Policy and Procedure;
- Investigating, and making decisions regarding, cases of academic misconduct as required by this Policy and Procedure; and
- considering, where required, written appeals regarding the outcomes of academic misconduct investigations and associated penalties.

4.4. Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- educating and advising students regarding academic honesty;
- modelling academic honesty in their own academic, scholarly and professional activities;
- identifying and reporting suspected breaches of academic honesty.

4.5. Students

Students are responsible for:

- ensuring that their academic work is their own;
- appropriately acknowledging the work and ideas of others; and
- reporting suspected breaches of academic honesty.

5. Relevant Documents

- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure
- TEQSA Guidance Note: Academic Integrity 2019

6. Definitions

- **Academic Honesty** - Acting in academic and scholarly contexts with truthfulness, trustworthiness, openness, transparency, fairness and respect.
- **Academic Standards** - Benchmarks or indicators used to define a level or quality of achievement or performance in academic activities and academic outcomes, such as student selection, teaching, curriculum, assessment, learning outcomes, and research.

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