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2		Stephanie Gillott		June 2023	June 2024

OCA Academic Misconduct Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Define what Open College of the Arts (OCA) recognises as academic misconduct
2. Define the offences that OCA recognises as academic misconduct including:
   - plagiarism;
   - Self-plagiarism;
   - enabling plagiarism;
   - collusion;
   - contract cheating; and
   - inappropriate use of artificial intelligence

3. Explain how academic misconduct is normally identified.

4. Explains the procedures that will be followed when academic misconduct is identified; and

5. Outlines the type of penalties you may expect to receive if you are found to have engaged in academic misconduct

Values / principles

The Academic Misconduct Policy is informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education to promote academic integrity, and to identify, investigate, and respond to unacceptable academic practices in effective ways.

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Scope

This policy applies to all OCA students including those undertaking undergraduate study, postgraduate study, non-accredited study e.g., short courses. academic staff , staff and alumni. This document covers academic conduct that undermines the academic reputation and integrity of OCA

Changes

1. Removes reference to misconduct in an exam as not applicable to OCA students
2. Clarifies thresholds for triggering OCA cause for concern.
3. Clarifies OCA's definition of collusion
4. Includes new information on inappropriate use of artificial intelligence and the need to appropriately attribute any assistive technologies for summative assessment

Policies superseded by this document

This policy supercedes Version 1 of this policy

Related policies and legislation

This policy references:

- [Tuition Policy](#)
- [UK Quality Code](#)
- AMBeR (Academic Misconduct Benchmarking Research Project)

Policy / procedure

1. Definition

1.1. OCA defines academic misconduct as any action by a student which gives or has the potential to give an unfair advantage in assessment, or might assist someone else to gain an unfair advantage, or any activity likely to undermine

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the integrity essential to scholarship and research (as defined by Office for Independent Adjudicator). .

2. Offences OCA recognises as academic misconduct

2.1. Plagiarism

2.1.1. This is defined as the representation of another person's work or ideas as one's own, for example by failing to follow convention in acknowledging sources (correct referencing), use of quotation marks, etc. This includes the unauthorised use of one student's work by another student and the commissioning, purchase and submission of a piece of work, in part or whole, as the student's own.

2.1.2. Work means any intellectual output, and typically includes text, data, images, sound or performance and includes material downloaded from electronic sources.

2.1.3. Examples of plagiarism are:
- submitting assignments obtained from others, whether within or without the OCA, including on a commercial basis, and including from essay mills;
- fabrication of information;
- theft or misrepresentation of identity (which includes requesting others to undertake an assessment);
- misrepresenting or defaming the work or opinions of others;
- submitting the same work to satisfy the requirements of two assessments;
- colluding with others to submit work which is not entirely one's own

2.2. Self-Plagiarism

2.2.1. This is defined as students submitting their own work or part thereof when any of this has previously been submitted for marks or credits, even if in a different module or for a different qualification or completed prior to entry to OCA.

2.2.2. The only exceptions to this are where:

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- students are required to review and redraft their earlier work. In this instance students must cite that work as having been used in the assessment of a previous assignment or unit.
- Where students are representing work that has been previously submitted as a draft for formative feedback.

2.3. Enabling Plagiarism

2.3.1. This is defined as acts which may encourage or enable students to commit plagiarism e.g., posting your work or that of other students onto a website or social media platform, without citation

2.3.2. Enabling plagiarism is considered academic misconduct regardless of whether the work you shared was a draft, incomplete or finished piece of work and whether or not the work includes marks, comments or other materials produced by a tutor, supervisor or other marker and whether or not you intended to enable or encourage plagiarism. The only exception is where prior consent has been given by OCA in writing

2.4. Collusion

2.4.1. Collusion is working with one or more other students to produce a piece of work that students submit as their own work, or allowing other students to use any part of the work as if it is their own. In line with OCA's Tuition Policy, OCA encourages students to play an active role in their studies, and to make constructive contributions to the OCA learning community, including through collaboration with other students and through legitimate and transparent sharing of information and learning.

2.4.2. Collusion can include:
- asking another person to produce material for you;
- working together with other individuals to produce shared material but not acknowledging the collaboration or sharing;
- discussing the assignment with other students in too much detail or working together to prepare or share drafts of your

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work such that the work produced is very similar, for example in sources used, structure or wording;

- allowing other students to read through your draft or finished assignments before they have completed and submitted their own work;
- altering another student's assignment or allowing other individuals to alter your assignment by changing the content or meaning of the work or correcting facts or within the assignment. Exceptions will be made for students with an acknowledged learning disability. In these circumstances, a proof-reader may be used to ensure that the student's meaning is not misunderstood as a result of the quality and standard of writing. A proof-reader may identify spelling and basic grammatical errors. Inaccuracies in academic content should not be corrected nor should the structure of the piece of work be changed.

2.4.3.   Legitimate input from tutors or approved readers or scribes is not considered to be collusion.

2.4.4.   Discussing the material and ideas students are learning with their tutor and other students is beneficial and is encouraged. However, when the students submit their work for assessment, they must make sure this is entirely their own work, acknowledge any references to other work, and they should not share it with other students until the assessment has been completed. Any student using the work of others eg passing the work as their own, uploading to essay mills will be subject to penalties outlined in this policy

For some units students may be required, or wish to, collaborate, wholly or in part, with others. Collaborations may include students who exhibit or perform together, produce publications, prepare data, conduct research, or draft other forms of shared project work. To avoid collusion, students must be transparent and acknowledge any

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collaborative element to their project. This includes working with OCA Students or other people externally. Guidance is provided to students on working with others and developing effective collaborations through the Enterprise Hub, available on OCA Learn. For those units where collaboration is not required students should not collaborate or share work with each other

2.5.   Contract Cheating

2.5.1.   Contract cheating is the act of engaging with commercial assignment help services, including on websites and social media, to either obtain or make available assignments, assignment questions or OCA assessment resources. Contract cheating can involve either committing or enabling plagiarism

2.5.2.   Commercial assignment help services can include essay mills, services which offer a repository of answers to assessment questions, services which enable students to upload or share assessment questions and services which allow students to obtain tailored or automated answers to assessment questions

2.5.3.   If students use any of the following services they may be considered to be engaged in contract cheating:
- Using tailored services to write essays or other types of assignments;
- Using commercial services which offer access to a bank of answers to assessment questions and submitting any part of these as their own work
- Engaging others to conduct research on their behalf;
- Posting assignment questions or assessment resources to commercial websites or other platforms;
- Requesting answers or solutions to assessment questions from other individuals or services;
- Using services that offer automated answers or solutions to assessment questions and submitting these as their own work
- Using translation tools to generate text and submitting this as your own work

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2.5.4. Some services may use threats to report you to your institution for plagiarism to extort money. If this happens to you, you should always report the incident to OCA so appropriate action can be taken. OCA will take this into account in any subsequent academic conduct investigations.

2.6. Inappropriate use of artificial intelligence

2.6.1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers powerful and innovative digital tools to generate new content, including written, visual, or audio material. AI draws on vast databases to automatically develop coherent content in a particular style, according to instructions given by the user. Online AI tools include chatbots such as ChatGPT, visual tools such as DALL-E or Midjourney, generative music tools such as Amper Music or AIVA, or assistive technologies to help generate computer coding, amongst other uses.

2.6.2. It is legitimate to explore AI as a creative tool and an emerging technology. However any such use of assistive technologies should be acknowledged and appropriately referenced to ensure the academic integrity of work produced.

2.6.3. Inappropriate uses of AI could be seen as:
- a form of contract cheating, as described in 2.5, where students use AI to generate content that they are passing off as their own;

2.6.4. a form of collusion, as described in 2.4, where students use AI as a form of collaboration, but without acknowledging the involvement of these technologies in helping to influence and shape the creative process, or used to generate new content or ideas.

3. Identifying academic misconduct
3.1. <u>Summative assessment</u>

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3.1.1. All students will be asked to confirm at the time of submitting work for assessment that the work:
- is their own, not copied from elsewhere, and that any use of someone else's ideas or words has been appropriately acknowledged and referenced; (see 2.1)
- has been produced explicitly for that course unit, not copied from work undertaken previously; (see 2.2) and
- has declared all sources are correctly attributed, and the contribution of any assistive technologies is fully acknowledged. (see 2.6)

3.1.2. Extended written work, such as Critical Reviews or Dissertations, required as part of summative assessment submission will be required to undergo plagiarism checks. OCA uses Turnitin plagiarism detection software to identify matches between the student work and other online sources.

3.2. Formative feedback
3.2.1. Academic staff can at any time, raise concerns over any work submitted for formative feedback. This may be due to a:
- change in the student writing style which may indicate that the student has not written the assignment themselves
- significant differences in content or style within the same piece of work which could suggest that not all of the words used by the student are their own

3.2.2. If the tutor is concerned about possible academic misconduct in the work, or is unable to verify the work, these concerns should be flagged in the first instance to their Programme Leaders who will review and where required seek advice or investigation from the OCA Quality Team.

3.2.3. If the case is referred for investigation the student won't receive feedback for that piece of work until the investigation has concluded

4. Procedures for dealing with identified academic misconduct

4.1. After student work is put through Turnitin a report is produced which provides a similarity index against other online sources. This similarity index is

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reviewed by the OCA Assessment Team. The thresholds used by OCA to trigger a cause for concern are a similarity index of more than 30% overall, and/or more than 20% from one source.

4.2. If there is cause for concern raised either through plagiarism detection software or by a marker, the student may either be referred for study skills support or referred for further investigation by an OCA Quality & Enhancement Manager (QAEM). This happens alongside - but separate from - the assessment process

4.3. If the student is referred for study skills support, a disciplinary marker will not be added to the student record but a note will be made of the referral, including what it was for and what support/information the student was offered. If the student is found to have plagiarised in future, the fact that they were offered specific support on the subject will be taken into account by an QAEM when deciding on a disciplinary outcome and penalty

4.4. If a 'cause for concern' is triggered then a report of this is sent to a OCA Quality & Enhancement Manager (QAEM). The report will include:
- the location of any suspected plagiarism
- copy of the original work
- copy of the Turnitin report

4.5. Upon receipt of any allegation of plagiarism, the (QAEM) will decide if there is sufficient prima facie evidence to suggest that the student has contravened the regulations. If the decision is that there is not sufficient evidence, the case is dropped. Otherwise, this will be referred for disciplinary investigation. The student would only be notified of the 'cause for concern' if the case was referred to disciplinary investigation.

4.6. If the case is referred for disciplinary investigation, there are 3 steps that will be taken:
4.6.1. Step 1 - (QAEM) will write to the student concerned:
- to present the allegation(s);
- to request a written statement in response to the allegation(s) and any factors which the student would like taken into account;
- to request this reply within 10 working days of the date on which the letter is sent (also explaining the consequences of failure to reply);

- to enclose a copy of this policy;
- to also enclose copies of any evidence or report
- Students will be contacted via their provided OCA email accounts with the exception of students who have an approved ICT exemption who will receive a hard copy letter

4.6.2. Step 2 - Review of all evidence and student response to inform the decision if a breach of this policy has taken place and what penalty will be applied. Penalties are detailed in section 5. This review may take up to 30 working days. If the investigation will not be concluded within this period then the student will be contacted and advised of the delay and given an expected date for completion of review and outcome decision. The student will still be permitted to continue their studies whilst the investigation is underway. As this could still be part of the summative assessment process and could therefore be subject to academic appeal the QAEM will also convene with an independent Programme Leader to discuss and determine the outcome at this stage. The details of this discussion will be added to the student record.

4.6.3. Step 3 - Write to the student with the decision made in relation to the breach of policy. If a breach of policy is identified, a decision will be made as to whether a penalty should be applied. If no breach is found and the case is dismissed, it will be removed from the student record and the student may still be referred for study skills support to help them to improve their academic practice so the student does not find themselves in a similar position in the future.

4.6.4. If it is found that the student has used the services of a contract cheating website or essay mill or that they have used somebody else to write the assessment for them then this is considered to be serious academic misconduct and this may be referred directly to the OCA's Curriculum & Quality Committee (CQC) for investigation.

4.6.5. Academic misconduct offences will be investigated as soon as possible after an issue is raised. In some cases, this may mean that an investigation may take place months or even years after the offence was originally committed, for instance if the student material is found on an external website some time after it was first posted.

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Students can still be investigated for academic misconduct after they have completed their OCA studies. For these cases, OCA will liaise with the awarding institution to determine the appropriate penalties which could include the rescinding of awards previously given.

5. Penalties for Academic Misconduct

5.1. Types of Penalties

5.1.1. Students may receive an informal caution from the OCA Quality Team if it is considered that an offence has been committed but it is not sufficiently serious to warrant a disciplinary or an academic penalty. This will remain on the student record and can be taken into account if the student is referred for plagiarism investigations in future.

5.1.2. In cases of a breach of policy due to plagiarism OCA will use the AMBeR Tariff (see Appendix 1 for full AMBeR document) to determine the penalty when an offence has been committed.

5.2. AMBeR Tariff Points

5.2.1. In case of plagiarism in written work students will be assigned points as determined in the AMBeR Tariff using the following factors:

History

1st Time	100 points
2nd Time	150 points
3rd/+ Time	200 points

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Amount / Extent

Below 5% **AND** less than two sentences	80 points
As above but with **critical aspects*** plagiarised	105 points
Between 5% and 20% **OR** more than two sentences but not more than two paragraphs	105 points
As above but with **critical aspects*** plagiarised	130 points
Between 20% and 50% **OR** more than two paragraphs but not more than five paragraphs	130 points
As above but with **critical aspects*** plagiarised	160 points
Above 50% **OR** more than five paragraphs	160 points
Submission purchased from essay mill or ghostwriting service †	225 points

* Critical aspects are key ideas central to the assignment

Level / Stage

Level 1	70 points
Level 2	115 points
Level 3/Postgraduate	140 points

Value of Assignment

Standard weighting	30 points
Large project (e.g. final year dissertation)	60 points

Additional Characteristics

Evidence of deliberate attempt to disguise plagiarism by changing words, sentences or references to avoid detection **40 points**

5.3.   AMBer Tariff Penalties

    5.3.1.   Based on the points awarded above, the following penalties will be applicable:

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PENALTIES (Summative Work)

In all cases a formal warning is given and a record made contributing to the student's previous history

Points	Available Penalties (select one)
280 - 329	• No further action beyond formal warning • Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required, with no penalty on mark
330 - 379	• No further action beyond formal warning • Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required, with no penalty on mark • Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required but mark capped or reduced
380 - 479	• Assignment awarded 0% - resubmission required but mark capped or reduced • Assignment awarded 0% - no opportunity to resubmit
480 - 524	• Assignment awarded 0% - no opportunity to resubmit • Module awarded 0% - re-sit required, but mark capped or reduced • Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, but credit still awarded
525 – 559	• Module awarded 0% - re-sit required, but mark capped or reduced • Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, but credit still awarded • Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-sit, and credit lost • Award classification reduced • Qualification reduced (e.g. Honours -> no Honours) • Expelled from institution but credits retained • Expelled from institution with credits withdrawn
560+	• Module awarded 0% - no opportunity to resit, and credit lost • Award classification reduced • Qualification reduced (e.g. Honours -> no Honours) • Expelled from institution but credits retained • Expelled from institution with credits withdrawn

PENALTIES (Formative Work)

280 - 379	Informal warning
380+	Formal warning, with record made contributing to the student's previous history

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5.4. <u>Impact of penalties on your study</u>

    5.4.1. Any penalty where marks are deducted from the assignment score could have a detrimental effect on your overall unit result and could mean the difference between passing or failing the unit. A penalty which reduces the grade of pass received for the module could also affect the overall degree classification.

6. Appealing the decision

6.1. Students wishing to appeal the decision made as a result of an academic misconduct investigation have the right to do so. They should refer to OCA's [Academic Appeals Policy & Procedures](#) for details on how to do this.

Implementing the policy

Cases of academic misconduct will be recorded by OCA's Quality Team and inform the programme level annual monitoring.

Support for the policy

Students who need assistance in understanding this policy or require this in an alternative format, should in the first instance contact OCA's Learner Support Team at learnersupport@oca.ac.uk