

Good Academic Conduct and Academic Misconduct Policy

1. What is good academic conduct?

- i. Good academic conduct in your assessments is a series of professional actions based on integrity, honesty, fairness and respect.
- ii. Professional actions that show good academic conduct include:
 - Producing work for assessment that is solely your own
 - Not copying or paraphrasing the work of other people and submitting it as your own work
 - Acknowledging the authors, creators or sources you refer to in your assessments
 - Ensuring that the information you use in your assessments is valid and real
 - Avoiding any action that would give you an unfair advantage in your assessments
 - Not enabling another student to gain unfair advantage in their assessments
 - Using Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) appropriately
 - Complying with any ethical approval requirements related to your assessments
 - Complying with the National Centre and University of Kent Regulations overall

2. What is academic misconduct?

- i. Academic **misconduct** means that you have used dishonest or unfair practices in the way in which you have created your assessment task. The full range of academic **misconduct practices** are set out in Section 4.
- ii. What the National Centre considers to be academic misconduct may be different to what you have experienced at school/college or if you have studied in a country other than the UK. It is therefore important that you read the definitions of misconduct set out in this Policy. If you are unclear about any information in this document, or if you need help with matters such as referencing in your coursework, please contact maxwell@nationalcircus.org.uk
- iii. We will investigate any reports of possible academic misconduct in the process provided in Section 7. All reports will be defined as “possible” academic misconduct until we have investigated the report and have the relevant evidence to determine an outcome. More information about how we make that assessment is provided in Section 8.
- iv. A penalty will normally apply where we identify evidence of academic misconduct. More information about penalties is provided in Section 9.

3. Reasons you may be tempted to be dishonest in your assessments

- i. There are many reasons why you may think about acting dishonestly or unfairly in an assessment task. One reason is a direct intention to gain advantage in the assessment process. This is **never** the right course of action.
- ii. The National Centre also recognises that you may be tempted to act dishonestly or unfairly in an assessment because of a challenging situation you find yourself in. Examples of such circumstances include:

- Not fully understanding how to apply good academic conduct principles.
 - Wanting to succeed, but lacking confidence in your abilities to do so.
 - Experiencing pressure from other people to succeed, or where you feel the need to please them but are concerned that you will not meet their expectations through your own academic abilities.
 - Other situations in which you find yourself under significant pressure or stress.
- iii. If you find yourself in any of these circumstances or other similar situations, it is **never** the right course of action to act dishonestly or unfairly in your assessments. If you are experiencing any challenges, it is important to share your concerns. If you need support with developing your academic skills, please contact maxwell@nationalcircus.org.uk

4. Examples of Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism

- i. Plagiarism is where you include ideas and concepts from other sources and present them as your own. Doing this means that the assessment cannot be marked as your own work. Examples of plagiarism include:
- Copying sections from published materials and not referencing the original author/s
 - Rewording sentences, paragraphs or larger sections of published materials and not appropriately referencing the original author/s.
 - Copying or paraphrasing the work of another student, including in group work, or copying the work of a former student who has completed the same or similar assessment in the past.
 - Copying the written or artistic style of another person without referencing the source.
 - Self-plagiarism (see definition below).
- ii. Published materials or sources include, but are not limited to, books, articles, journals, reports, digital storage media, data, on-line sources, creative pieces of work and information created through Artificial Intelligence.
- iii. The National Centre provides [guidance on how to reference other sources](#) (add link). If you need further help, please contact maxwell@nationalcircus.org.uk

Self-Plagiarism

- i. Self-plagiarism is where you use part or all of a piece of work for an assessment task that you have submitted previously for a different assessment task.
- ii. You may use short quotations or sections from a previous assessment task if you reference the material appropriately.

Collusion

- i. Collusion is where you and another student/s work together on preparing or compiling an assessment task where collaboration is **not** part of the assessment task. The National Centre recognises that there are many practical assessments in which you are required to collaborate

with another student/s, and we will therefore always be clear when we expect the work to be your own.

- ii. At The National Centre for Circus Arts collaboration is an inherent element to our arts philosophy. Within the NCA206 The Devising Process and NCA307 The Devised Performance modules collaboration towards the assessment task is expected and facilitated by the teaching body. If an accusation of collusion is presented for either NCA206 or NCA307, the collaborative approach of both modules will be considered when investigating any claims.
- iii. Examples of collusion where working with another student is **not** part of the assessment brief include:
 - Working together to plan how you will respond to an assessment task
 - Helping another student/s develop the ideas and concepts in their assessment task
 - Including the ideas and concepts of another student/s in your assessment task
 - Providing another student/s with access to part or all the material that will form your assessment task submission, including any draft work
 - Using the materials provided by another student within your assessment without acknowledging the source (see also the definition of plagiarism)

Misuse of Generative AI

- i. Using Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) to gain unfair advantage in your assessment is academic misconduct. It includes:
 - Plagiarising information from Generative AI sources without appropriate referencing (see also the definition of plagiarism).
 - Using a Generative AI tool to generate all or part of your assessment (see also the definition of contract cheating).
 - Using a Generative AI tool to improve the standard of your assessment beyond your own competence. This includes for example, the style of your usual written English.
 - Falsifying information resulting from the Generative AI tool you use (see also the definition of falsification).
 - Undertaking any other action using Generative AI which constitutes academic misconduct.

Contract Cheating

- i. Contract cheating is where you engage with another person or organisation to complete part or all your assessment task which you then submit as your own work. Contract cheating can take place with or without a formal contract. It includes:
 - Engaging with an essay writing service that you may seek out online or in person, or which may try to contact you online or in person. The UK Government criminalised essay mills in 2022 and their operations are therefore illegal.
 - Asking another person to contribute to or undertake your assessment task in full. This includes but is not limited to asking other students, friends, family, private tutors and copy-editing services.
 - Using a Generative AI tool to create part or all your assessment and submitting that work as your own.

Cheating in a test or examination

- i. You must complete any test or examination by yourself unless the assessment brief requires you to complete the assessment with another student/s.
- ii. Cheating in a test or examination (in person or online) conditions is where the assessment brief requires you to complete work by yourself and where you try to gain advantage over other students by not doing so. It includes:
 - Attempting to acquire or acquiring advance knowledge of the content of a test or examination before it is issued
 - Attempting to communicate or communicating with other student/s during the assessment, including through technology and social media
 - Attempting to copy, or copying from another student
 - Allowing another student to attempt to copy or copy from you
 - Obtaining, or attempting to obtain, any other assistance from another student
 - Using, or attempting to gain access to, any material or device not permitted as part of the assessment
 - Impersonating another student or allowing another student or any other individual to impersonate you in the assessment
 - Refusing to comply with a reasonable request made by a member of staff where they suspect possible cheating
 - Any other action that you take with the intention of gaining unfair advantage

Falsifying information

- i. Falsifying information is academic misconduct because you are including information in your assessment that is not real. It includes:
 - Claiming to carry out observations, interviews, data collection or any other form of research when you have not done so
 - Creating false data
 - Manipulation and/or selection of data or imagery that creates a false outcome
 - Using a Generative AI tool that may provide you with false information
 - Creating or obtaining information illegally

Not gaining ethical approval

- i. Not gaining ethical approval for sensitive research, or changing the research methodology without subsequent approval, is academic misconduct.

5. Reporting possible academic misconduct

- i. Possible academic misconduct may be identified by a member of staff marking your work, by an External Examiner, by another student or by any person with knowledge of the possible misconduct. Possible cases must be reported to maxwell@nationalcircus.org.uk.
- ii. A possible case must be supported by evidence for it to be investigated. Evidence will depend on the type of assessment and the type of misconduct being investigated but can include:
 - Extracts from hard-copy or on-line published sources, including Generative AI, and a comparison with relevant sections of your work.

- Similarity to the work you submitted previously, or to that submitted by another current or previous student.
- How your style (e.g. writing style) significantly changes within the assessment or when compared with a previous assessment.
- Copies of message exchanges between you and another student or individual which includes matters relating to possible academic misconduct.
- Reports on misconduct within a test or examination setting.
- Data or analysis of data that does appear true or has been manipulated inappropriately.
- Absence of ethical approval as part of the assessment process or where actions have been taken outside the ethical approval.

6. Investigating possible academic misconduct

- i. The Head of Higher Education and at least one other member of programme staff will investigate the report of possible academic misconduct and will decide if:

- There is **no evidence** of academic misconduct and the case will not go any further.

Or

- The concern is **poor academic practice** where plagiarism or self-plagiarism is limited to a small number of sentences, where this is the first coursework assessment that you have taken at the National Centre, and where there is no evidence to suggest you had a direct intention to gain advantage. Cases of poor academic practice will be followed up by the Head of Higher Education who will meet with you to discuss the concerns and to put in place support so that you know how to avoid poor practice in future assessments.

Or

- The concern goes beyond poor academic practice, and the evidence suggests that possible **minor academic misconduct** may have occurred. Minor academic misconduct includes poor referencing and minor plagiarism by using unreferenced sources including Generative AI and which is beyond a few sentences (see poor academic practice) and therefore appears intentional.

Or

- The concern goes beyond minor academic misconduct, and the evidence suggests possible **major academic misconduct**. Actions that can constitute major academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, repeated minor misconduct, using substantial sections of unreferenced text or other sources including from Generative AI, collusion with another student, contract cheating including use of Generative AI, cheating in a test or examination, falsifying data including through Generative AI, breach of ethical requirements.

7. Where possible minor or major academic misconduct is identified

- i. We will contact you in writing if there is evidence of possible academic misconduct. You will be provided with a summary of the concern and the supporting evidence that has been compiled to date.

- ii. In that email, you will also be invited to a meeting with the Head of Degree and another member of programme staff (the panel) to discuss the possible misconduct. The meeting may be held in-person or online and will take place within seven working days of you being notified. You may choose to be accompanied by a friend or family member and should inform the National Centre in advance if you plan to do so.
- iii. If you cannot attend at the agreed time and there is good reason that aligns with the National Centre extenuating circumstances policy, the meeting will be rescheduled.
- iv. You have the right not to attend the meeting or to provide any further information. The meeting will go ahead, and the outcome will be based upon the information the panel holds to make its decision.
- v. If you know you have engaged in academic misconduct and wish to share this fact before the scheduled meeting, you should inform the Head of Higher Education. You should also share the reasons why you engaged in the misconduct. Where you inform about your misconduct, the scheduled meeting will not normally go ahead, and the panel will determine a penalty. This penalty will be confirmed in writing and will reflect the nature and level of misconduct. Your admission and any relevant mitigating circumstances will be considered when the Panel determines the penalty.
- vi. In all other cases, a scheduled meeting will go ahead. The concerns and evidence will be presented to you, and you will be invited to respond. National Centre staff may ask you questions, and you may also have questions for them.
- vii. In cases that involve more than one student (e.g. collusion) the Panel will meet with each student separately.
- viii. You will be asked to leave the meeting when the panel decides the outcome.

8. Determining an outcome

- i. The National Centre will determine the outcome of an academic misconduct allegation on the balance of probability and standard of proof. This means that for us to uphold an allegation, we need to show sufficient evidence that either misconduct occurred or is more likely than not to have occurred. More information about this assessment, and how it differs from a criminal investigation, is available on the website of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.
- ii. The outcome from the investigation can be that either:
 - No further action will be taken as there is not enough evidence to show on the balance of probability and standard of proof that the misconduct took place.
 - Or
 - There is sufficient evidence to show on the balance of probability and standard of proof – or through admission by the student about which the allegation was made – that the misconduct took place and a penalty will be applied.

Or

- Exceptionally, further information is required to complete the investigation.
- iii. The National Centre will inform you of the outcome of the meeting within seven working days. You will have the right to appeal the outcome based on specific criteria and Section 11 provides more information.

9. Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Process

- i. A penalty will take account of:
- The nature and severity of the academic misconduct and therefore the extent to which you were dishonest within the assessment.
 - Your level of study
 - Any previous upheld cases of academic misconduct
 - Admission of misconduct
 - Any relevant mitigating circumstances
- ii. In cases of collusion where more than one student is involved, the National Centre will ensure consistency of approach in any penalty that applies. Any difference will normally only apply where there is a difference in a student's mitigating circumstances or in admission of the misconduct.
- iii. The National Centre for Circus Arts follows the penalty system of its accrediting institution, The University of Kent. This can be found in the [Credit Framework for Taught Courses of Study - Annex 10, Appendix B](#)

10. Revisiting academic misconduct cases previously dismissed or after graduation

- i. The National Centre may revisit cases of possible academic misconduct that have been previously unfounded or dismissed if new evidence is presented. The procedure set out in this document will be used.
- ii. This action will always take place where the evidence shows possible major academic misconduct has taken place.

11. Appeals

- i. An appeal can be made through the University of Kent process also listed in the policy section where this policy is found.

12. Support for students attending meetings about misconduct of disciplinary matters

- i. A student can choose to be accompanied by a friend or family member for any meeting connected to the investigation and disciplinary process.
- ii. The person accompanying you may speak on your behalf or may provide you with moral support. The National Centre would need to see your written consent for another person to represent you (i.e. speak on your behalf) in a meeting.

- iii. A student accompanying another student to a meeting or representing a student in any part of the process cannot also be a witness to the alleged misconduct.
- iv. We recognise that you may choose to seek representation if you are being investigated for alleged major misconduct which could result in you being excluded from the National Centre. We ask you to inform us in advance of a meeting if you plan to be accompanied by legal representation so that we can consider our own position.

13. Confidentiality

- i. We will manage academic misconduct allegations confidentially. It will be necessary for a limited number of people to know the details of the allegation for it to be investigated.
- ii. These people will include staff who manage the allegation, who undertake the investigation, are named in the allegation, are witnesses to the matters it raises, are part of a panel that considers the allegation or who are asked to review a disciplinary outcome. The CEO will also be briefed on allegations that may have significant reputational implications.

14. Malicious allegations

- i. Academic misconduct allegations made against a student solely on malicious grounds, will be considered as a disciplinary matter against the student making that allegation.

15. Support to Study

- i. We will consider a student's fitness to study if there is evidence to show that they are potentially not fit to engage with their programme at this time. This may be relevant to the student impacted by the alleged misconduct and/or to the student alleged to have engaged in misconduct.
- ii. We may suspend actions to investigate the alleged misconduct if we need to prioritise the Support to Study Policy.

16. Monitoring of this Policy

- (a) The National Centre Academic Board will monitor the number and nature of academic misconduct cases and appeals and a report will subsequently be made to the Board of Governors. Part of this monitoring process will also determine if changes need to be made to this policy or any other related policy to ensure their ongoing effectiveness and/or to align with sector good practice or new regulatory requirements.

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