# Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management

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# Introduction and Context

# Introduction

The National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) is committed to providing advice and guidance to academics and learners, professional services staff, researchers, institutional management and all stakeholders involved in upholding and supporting a culture of academic integrity in Irish higher education and training (see Academic Integrity Guidelines, (NAIN (2021a)).

This document sets out a framework for the identification, recording and management of cases of academic misconduct[1] within higher education institutions (HEIs). It has been developed by the National Academic Integrity Network in response to a need identified by members. It is intended to support the development of a common approach to managing academic misconduct and to facilitate analysis across HEIs.

In this guidance document, examples and resource materials are provided for institutional guidance. These materials are not intended to endorse specific approaches; instead, they are made available to institutions to aid them in the development of policies and processes that meet their particular needs, structures and contexts.

This framework considers academic misconduct case management as an important aspect of the wider national and institutional approach to academic integrity. It particularly focuses on how academic integrity is supported and protected by enabling systems for robust decision-making, management and recording of academic misconduct cases. A number of

tools are provided to support institutions in this regard. It is designed to empower staff to engage more easily with academic misconduct while ensuring a consistent, fair and equitable approach for all. It can be applied to the management of all forms of academic misconduct including, but not limited to, examinations managed at institutional level and assessments overseen by schools or departments. The Framework can also aid reporting.

When taking a systematic approach to managing academic misconduct, the primary objective must be the support and promotion of academic integrity. Thus, a restorative approach, that embeds the principles of academic integrity, is fundamental to ensuring successful outcomes.

The management of academic misconduct requires specific interventions. In this Framework, the discrete stages that form the lifecycle of managing academic misconduct cases are identified, summarised, and synthesised. The Framework has been informed by a review of relevant literature and practice in the area, both nationally and internationally. The purpose of the Framework is to assist and inform the management of cases of academic misconduct by HEIs. The Framework should be used in tandem with the relevant, existing HEI policies, processes and procedures. Its aim is to enable staff to engage with the processes and ensure alignment across HEIs in their reports on cases.

The NAIN's Academic Integrity: National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms,

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1   Academic Misconduct to include Unauthorised Content Generation defined as ' the production of academic work, in whole or part, for academic credit, progression or award, whether or not a payment or other favour is involved, using unapproved or undeclared human or technological assistance' . (Foltynek et al., 2023)

(NAIN (2021b)), together with this Framework, provide a basis for a shared local and national-level approach, thereby enabling a robust and reflective national reporting structure. This Framework is based on the fundamental principle that a learner should not receive credit for work they did personally undertake.

In developing the Framework, it was first important to capture the lifecycle of managing academic misconduct cases, which is then used to frame the component areas. The lifecycle for the management of cases of academic misconduct is represented in Figure 1.



The lifecycle for the management of cases of academic misconduct

1 Education and awareness buidling

2 Detection and investigation

3 Determine academic misconduct type

4 Determine sanctions(s)

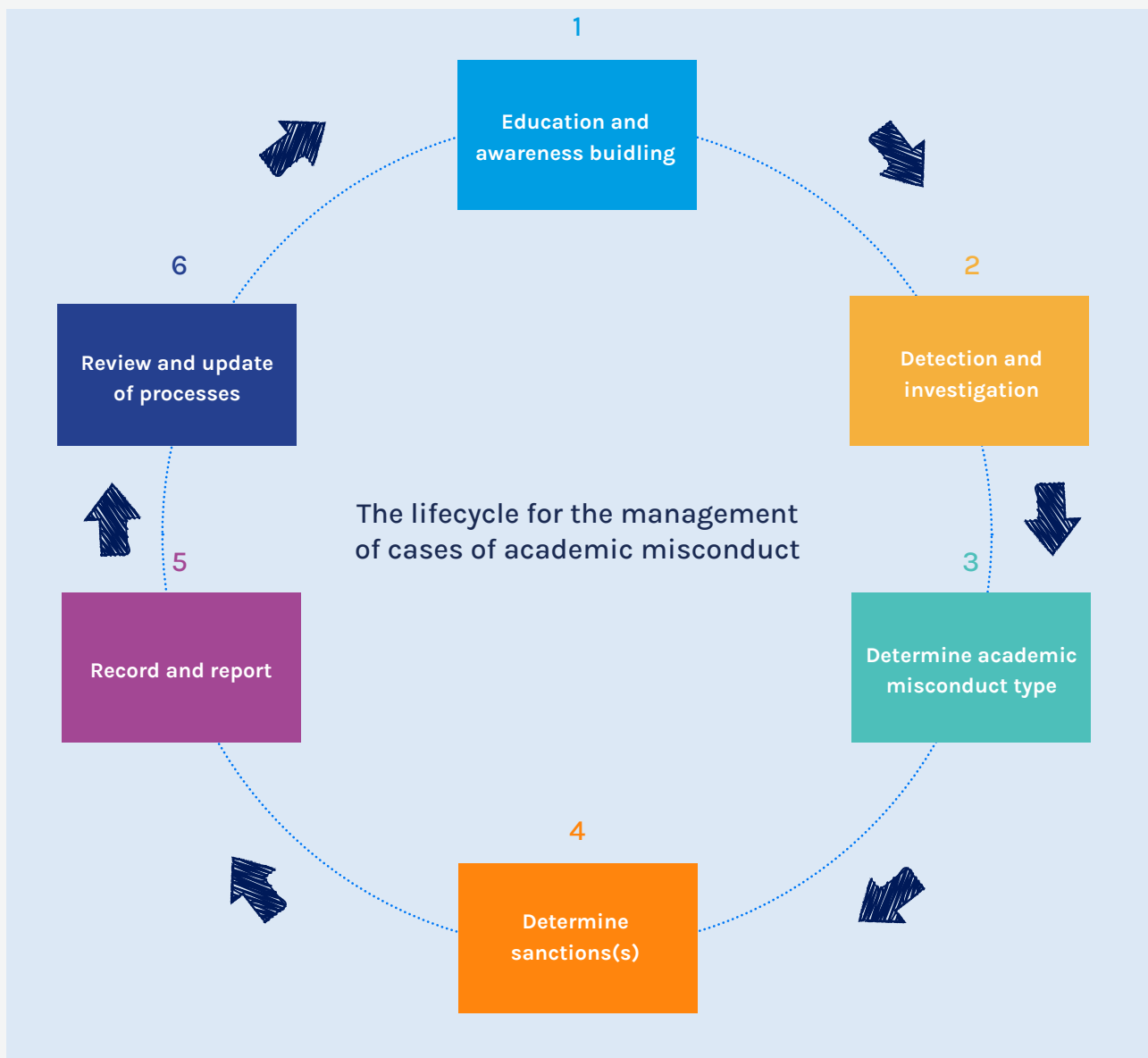5 Record and report

6 Review and update of processes

Figure 1: The lifecycle for the management of cases of academic misconduct

# Framework Overview

This Framework situates academic misconduct case management within the context of HEIs fostering a strong culture of academic integrity, which is supported by six key pillars, as outlined in Figure 2. This depicts the Academic Integrity Conceptual Framework hexagon (Bretag & Mahmud (2012)), which is the central concept underpinning the Framework.

To develop the framework, it was decided to investigate national and international best practice in three different areas:

1.  Defining the stages through which academic misconduct incidents and their investigation progress (lifecycle stage).

2.  Identifying the principles and action points associated with addressing the misconduct at each stage (policy intervention points).

3.  Identifying templates that can assist in the above (supporting templates).

These three areas formed the basis for a consultation paper circulated to key stakeholders in 2022, from which this Framework was developed.

In order to develop a culture of academic integrity, it is important to have a clear, transparent and constructive approach to academic misconduct and its case management.  A macro-framework for addressing academic misconduct case management has been developed and is represented in Figure 3. Framework for Academic Misconduct Case Management

The Framework makes use of the lifecycle and takes a holistic approach, which encompasses all dimensions of academic integrity. It addresses both the supportive and punitive aspects of academic integrity and should promote the embedding of a culture of academic integrity.

It can incorporate an approach where learners are encouraged to recognise and admit to academic misconduct. In such cases, it is recommended that, where learners provide a full and frank admission of having engaged in academic misconduct (especially where this is forthcoming at an early stage), both the disciplinary process used and sanctions imposed are less onerous than those which would otherwise apply. This approach both incentivises and rewards honesty on the part of the learner and reduces the bureaucratic burden on the HEI.

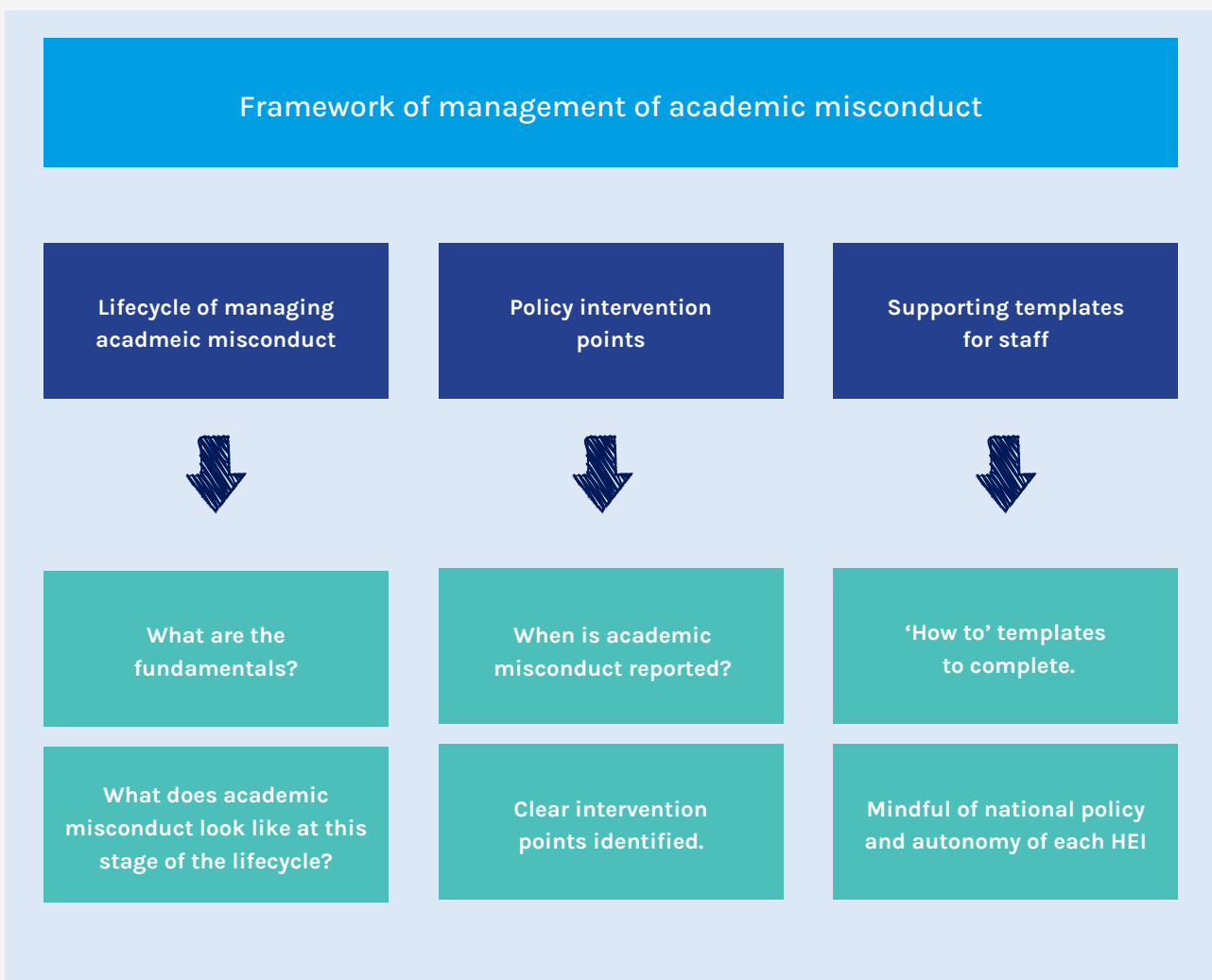Figure 2 Academic Integrity Conceptual Framework - Source: Bretag &Mahmud (2012)



Figure 3: Framework for Academic Misconduct Case Management

# Lifecycle for Managing Academic Misconduct

Six distinct stages have been identified in the lifecycle for managing academic misconduct. These are summarised in Figure 4 below. This approach facilitates staff and learners in navigating the Framework according to stages of investigation and case management as required.

# 1.3    Policies

Throughout this Framework, the intention is to provide guidance on good practice that can be adapted by HEIs as required to suit their own operating context. The suggested allocation of responsibility for case management is indicative only. Ultimately, institutional autonomy will require each HEI to define its own path in accordance with governance structures.

Academic integrity policies and procedures which align to the National Academic Integrity Network Guidelines, aim to ensure that the HEI can embed a culture of academic integrity, prevent academic misconduct and detect and manage academic misconduct when it occurs. To support the maintenance of academic integrity within institutions, providers must have policies which state that suspected cases of academic misconduct will be investigated. Further, these policies should refer to the internal quality assurance measures in place

that give confidence to all stakeholders that the provider can undertake the following steps in the management of academic misconduct:

- Detection
- Reporting
- Consideration
- Decision
- Response
- Record
- Review

Stage 1: Education and awareness

Stage 2: Detection and initial investigation

Stage 3: Full investigation

Stage 4: Consideration, classification and sanction

Stage 5: Recording and reporting

Stage 6: Reviewing

Figure 4: Stages of Framework for Academic Misconduct Case Management aligned to the Lifecycle of Academic Misconduct

# Stage 1: Education and Awareness

# Stage 1: Education and Awareness

When addressing academic misconduct, the HEI's primary focus should be on educating learners and staff on the upholding of academic integrity as well as the importance and value of academic integrity to assuring the quality of awards made by the institution. Prevention is always preferable to detection and punishment. HEIs are encouraged to be proactive in the provision of education and awareness training for all HEI constituents to foster a culture in which academic integrity is valued and protected.

In line with the NAIN Academic Integrity Guidelines, prevention begins with education. It is important that all HEIs have a robust system in place which ensures that all learners and staff are aware of institutional academic integrity policies, procedures and guidelines, the kinds of poor practice that may constitute a breach of academic integrity standards, and the related sanctions that apply. Furthermore, learners should be provided with opportunities to develop their academic writing, referencing, and other relevant skills.

This includes:

- Induction processes for learners which emphasise the importance of academic integrity and support the embedding of appropriate practices.

- Mandatory academic integrity training for learners including training related to examination conduct.

- Support through library services or through teaching and learning centres, for individuals who have particular needs or concerns.

- Partnership approaches with learner representatives or champions to promote academic integrity throughout the year and throughout the programme.

- Enhancing assessment design and other mitigation measures. Curriculum design and delivery should include formative opportunities to support learners in developing their academic writing and other skills.

- In early-stage modules, as part of clarifying the assessment task and criteria, providing students with guidance on the correct approaches to citation in their discipline including conventions for paraphrasing.

Timely discussions with learners help raise awareness of what constitutes academic integrity and what practices are considered unacceptable and why. As stated above, prevention of academic misconduct will always be preferable to detection and prosecution. While it is not possible to eliminate cheating completely, the practice can be discouraged through education and proactive discussions with learners to raise awareness of academic integrity and why it is important, as well as the damage caused by breaches of academic integrity.

Providers should highlight to their staff that poor academic practice may result from a learner's lack of understanding of what is expected in producing a piece of academic work. It might include poor referencing, weak citation, or failure to identify the contributions made by others in completing the work. Such errors can arise from inexperience or carelessness rather than a clear intention to deceive. A culture of open and supportive communication, where learners and staff are encouraged to have frank, open and honest conversations about academic misconduct, should be promoted.

# A Tool to Support Education & Awareness

The core values of an academic integrity framework include:

- Honesty
- Trust
- Fairness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Courage.

ICAI (2021)

Where HEIs have developed learner honour codes, these values are typically at their core.

A study by McCabe et al (1999) found that learners at schools with academic honour codes view the issue of academic integrity in a fundamentally different way to learners at non-honour code institutions. The study suggests that academic integrity is viewed more positively by learners in institutions having an academic honour code and this was related to the influence such codes have on how learners reflect on academic integrity and academic misconduct. A recent study (Tatum, 2022) found that 'honor codes appear to work by educating students about academic integrity and holding them accountable through social norms, expectations, attitudes, reminders, and clear policies for addressing academic misconduct.'

An example of a student honour code is provided in Figure 5. The Student Honour Code of Western Sydney University [WSU (2018)]

It is recommended that academic institutions develop a student code of honour appropriate to their own context and promote this as part of learner orientation and education on academic integrity. In submission of assignments, for credit, having a separate declaration which states that there was no unauthorised content generation (UCG) used as part of the submission could augment the Honour Code approach.

# A Commitment to myself and my university community

**I understand** what constitutes academic misconduct such as plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), cheating, collusion, and fabrication or falsifiation of data and **I will not commit them.**

To help me act with academic integrity, **I will pursue knowledge and skills** by engaging in the following activities to the best of my abilities:

» reading learning guides, marking criteria, assessment and research guidelines,

» planning for classes, assessments, and research,

» accessing textbooks, readings and other materials for my units, and conducting independent reearch,

» using appropriate references in my assessments and research to give credit to ideas, words, and information of other authoers,

» participating in tutorials, workshops and online discussions, and using these opportunities to gain knowledge, understanding, and skills to succeed in my studies and research,

» actively participating in group assignments/assessments and study groups but avoiding collusion with others in all types of assessment tasks;

» taking lecturer, tutor and research supervisor feedbakck on board and applying it to improve my studies, research, and professional skills,

» seeking assistance from tutors, lecturers, librarians, Study Smart advisors, research supervisors, PASS MESH, and other University support services if I need help with my studies, and not from individuals and websites that offer to do assessments or research for me.

**I have read** and **understand** the Core Academic Integrity Values of Western Sydney University Students and agree to not **compromise** them at and point of my learning journey.

**I will personally contribute** to maintaining the culture of acamedic integrity at Western Syndeny University and promote it amongst my peers.

**I understand** that if I fail to follow this Student Honour Code and violate the Student Misconduct Rule by committing academic misconduct, **I may face consequences** depending on the severity of the misconduct and ranging from a warning and reduction of a mark, to a revocation of an ward and expulsion from the University.

**I am aware** that academic misconduct can affect my professional life as **I may be blocked** from enetering my chosen profession.

**I have read and agree to follow this student honour code.**

Figure 5: The Student Honour Code of Western Sydney University [WSU (2018)]

# Stage 2: Detection and Initial Investigation

# Stage 2: Detection and Initial Investigation

All cases of suspected academic misconduct should be investigated to assure the integrity of the assessment work completed by learners.

Staff are at the frontline of prevention and detection. Rogerson (2017) proposed a cyclical approach to identifying, examining, evaluating, and confirming cases of academic misconduct, and specifically contract cheating (Figure 6). This defines the three key stages. Firstly, there is a preparation stage where the role of the design of assessments is discussed, and academic integrity is championed. In the second stage, the examination and grading stage, key questions provide a guide for the investigator to determine if there is a case to answer. In the third stage, evaluation of the data leads to a conclusion of the investigation.

This cyclical approach can be used for other forms of academic misconduct including, but not limited to, plagiarism, collusion, falsification etc. The approach can also help to differentiate allegations of deliberate misconduct from cases where there is a poor or underdeveloped understanding of academic writing conventions. It provides opportunities to highlight instances where learners can be supported and educated to avoid academic misconduct.  As well as facilitating detection and investigation, the approach supports education and awareness through



Figure 6 Process for assessment preparation, grading, and evaluation (Rogerson, 2017)

the engagement of learners, which enables conversations between staff and learners, as well as feedback opportunities.

Robust assessment methodologies underpin academic integrity and this process may also guide and support strong assessment design. The application of UDL (Universal Design for Learning) to assessment design can further support the development of more authentic, learner-centred assessments (CAST, 2020).

Within examination settings, HEIs should employ competent strategies for the identification of alleged academic misconduct by appropriately trained personnel.

Figure 7, below, clearly articulates the strategies and approaches to academic misconduct case management based on risk assessment and appropriate relevant sanctions. It summarises the tension between the attitude to misconduct and 'cheating' and the possible approaches to dealing with the level of the suspected academic misconduct.

It is the responsibility of the learner to:

- Be familiar with the academic protocols, rules and conventions that relate to the assessment of their module and programme.

- Ensure that all work submitted by way of assessment is fully their own, or in group work, that of the group.

- Ensure that all the assessment items they submit are the assessment artefacts for which they wish to be assessed.

The investigator's opinion at the conclusion of the initial investigation stage should determine, whether or not a case should be progressed to the full investigation stage and associated pathway for a full investigation if required.
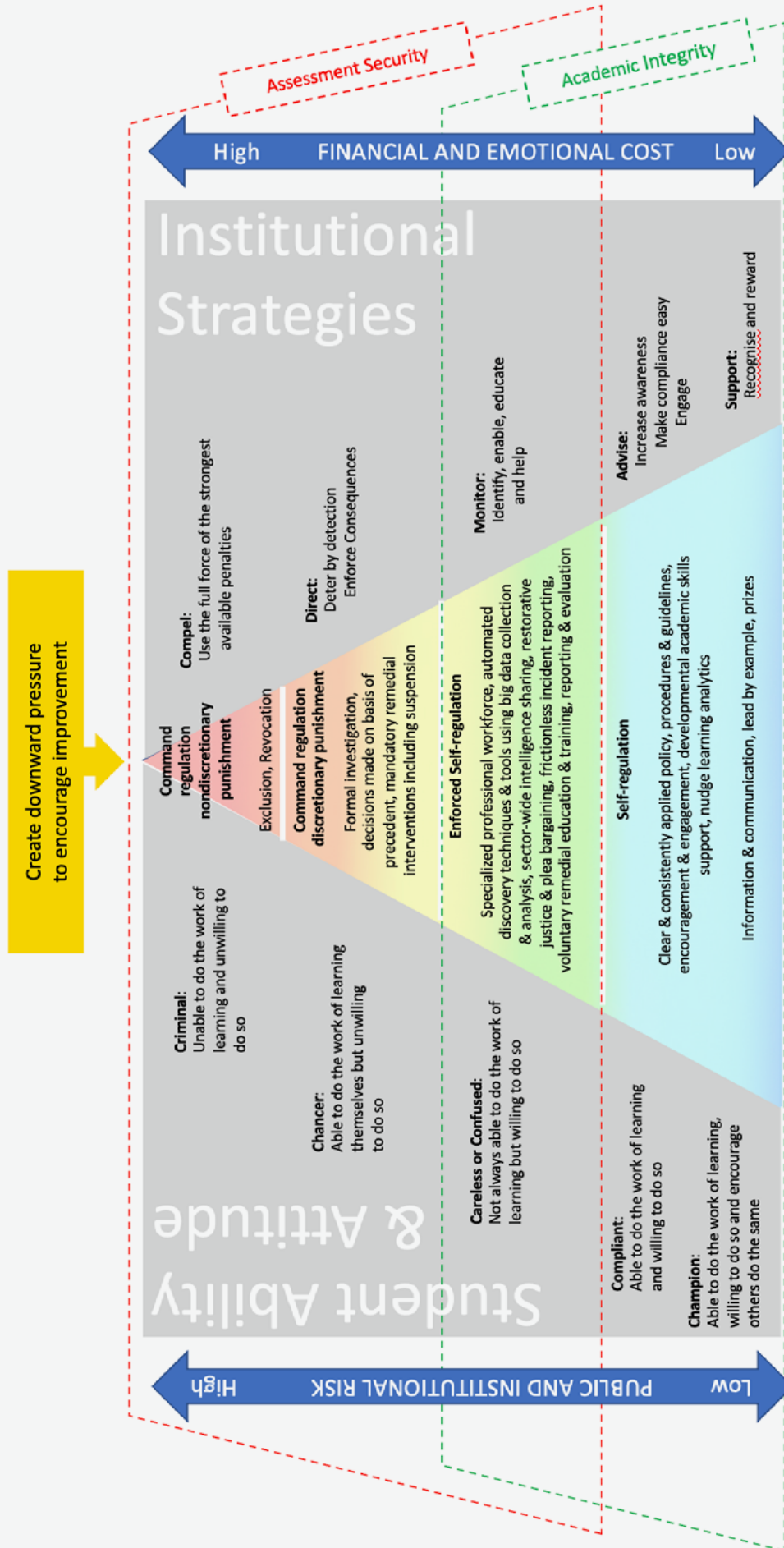
**FINANCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COST** — High ... Low

**PUBLIC AND INSTITUTIONAL RISK** — High ... Low

Assessment Security

Academic Integrity

Institutional Strategies

Student Ability & Attitude

Create downward pressure to encourage improvement

**Compel:** Use the full force of the strongest available penalties

**Direct:** Deter by detection Enforce Consequences

**Monitor:** Identify, enable, educate and help

**Advise:** Increase awareness Make compliance easy Engage

**Support:** Recognise and reward

**Command regulation nondiscretionary punishment**

Exclusion, Revocation

**Command regulation discretionary punishment**

Formal investigation, decisions made on basis of precedent, mandatory remedial interventions including suspension

**Enforced Self-regulation**

Specialized professional workforce, automated discovery techniques & tools using big data collection & analysis, sector-wide intelligence sharing, restorative justice & plea bargaining, frictionless incident reporting, voluntary remedial education & training, reporting & evaluation

**Self-regulation**

Clear & consistently applied policy, procedures & guidelines, encouragement & engagement, developmental academic skills support, nudge learning analytics

Information & communication, lead by example, prizes

**Criminal:** Unable to do the work of learning and unwilling to do so

**Chancer:** Able to do the work of learning themselves but unwilling to do so

**Careless or Confused:** Not always able to do the work of learning but willing to do so

**Compliant:** Able to do the work of learning and willing to do so

**Champion:** Able to do the work of learning, willing to do so and encourage others do the same

Figure 7 The Educational Integrity Enforcement Pyramid (Ellis & Murdoch, 2023)

Stage 3:
# Full Investigation

# Stage 3: Full Investigation

Where appropriate, cases can be progressed in line with institutional policy and approach, to the full investigation stage. In addition to ensuring that unfair advantage is not provided to those who engage in academic misconduct, investigations will act as a deterrent to other learners, protecting the reputation of the assessment work completed and the academic awards conferred upon all learners. Investigations should be timely, with a consistent approach taken throughout.

The general principles that can be applied to investigations of alleged academic misconduct include:

- Investigations should be instigated as soon as an incident of academic misconduct is suspected and completed as quickly as possible. However, investigations are not time bound to the period in which the assessment has been considered; where necessary, a retrospective investigation can take place, including following completion of an academic programme and/or the granting of an award to a learner.

- Investigations can take place in relation to:

  » Any form of assessment (formative and summative), as each assessment is a measure of the learner's achievement of the learning outcomes associated with their academic work.

  » Work submitted for assessment at any level (undergraduate, postgraduate and for taught or research based academic work).

- If, following initial investigation, it is determined that there is no case to answer, the case should be closed without delay and all relevant stakeholders informed of this decision, and appropriate supports offered to the learner.

## Tools to Support the Investigation of Academic Misconduct

Where academic misconduct does arise, its detection within learner submissions can be challenging. The increasing reliance of staff and learners on technology has expanded the variety of approaches that may be used to deal with academic misconduct. Still, its detection relies significantly on the vigilance of the assessor and their willingness to escalate the process (Rogerson (2017); (Dawson and Sutherland-Smith (2018)).

While technology can be of assistance, the teacher's or assessor's experience and their knowledge of their learners are equally important, although this may be limited where class sizes are large. Often, the teacher will recognise a potential breach of academic integrity because the language, pattern and style of writing is inconsistent with the norm for the learner in question. Where a suspicion of academic misconduct arises, an evidentiary approach is required to support any allegation. One must also be able to ascertain, in some objective manner, the extent and seriousness of the breach.

Tools can be used by higher education staff to support detection, documentation and categorisation of academic misconduct.

They can support distinction between deliberate misrepresentation and a genuine lack of academic skill and application of scholarly conventions on the part of the offender. They can also be used to detect and interpret clues and patterns that support an allegation of misconduct (Dawson and Sutherland-Smith (2018)).

Where academic misconduct is suspected, proving it can be challenging without the right skills and / or access to resources. Staff may feel it is too difficult or demanding or may lack confidence in handling such matters (Rogerson (2017)). TEQSA (2020) provides a set of key principles for substantiating contract cheating that includes a simple checklist to aid staff investigations of suspected academic misconduct based on textual signals or evidence. These same principles are broadly applicable and may be further adapted to other forms of learner academic misconduct including use of 'unauthorised content generation'.

The guiding principles have been expanded and developed for an Irish context in Table 1 The Principles for Education and Investigation.

## Table 1: The Principles for Education and Investigation

| Guiding principle (TEQSA (2020)) | Example |
|---|---|
| **1. Educate:** Ensure all staff are aware of the signals that can indicate learner academic misconduct. | Staff are provided with an online resource that helps them to assess submitted work for signs of potential academic misconduct. This would include but not be limited to electronic text matching services. |
| **2. Investigate:** One or two signals do not provide enough evidence to substantiate cheating but can provide cause for further investigation. | Staff member makes use of online template and other means to make a judgement about an item of submitted assessment. |
| **3. Use policy:** Refer suspected cases of academic misconduct to an appropriate investigator and decision-maker, as per your institution's relevant policies. | Staff member identifies high level of text similarity via software; learner record indicates previous issues with academic integrity; refers case to appropriate next level. |
| **4. Not 'beyond doubt', but 'balance of probabilities':** Investigate suspected breaches as a lay proceeding, using the standard from civil law, where the 'balance of probabilities' is the relevant test to which allegations must be subjected.<br><br>The balance of probabilities is based on 'clear and convincing evidence' that it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. This is less demanding than the legal test of 'beyond reasonable doubt'. | Staff member interviews learner in relation to issue with academic integrity. Learner provides justification for incident that staff member does not find account convincing. Staff recommends progression to next stage despite learner account, on the basis that an infringement has occurred on the 'balance of probabilities'. |
| **5. Examine:** Look carefully at each aspect of the document and other relevant sources of evidence.<br><br>Identify every aspect that is cause for concern.<br><br>Conduct an interview with the learner to ascertain his/her familiarity with the contents of the assignment. | |

| Responsibility | Resources required |
|---|---|
| Possible national responsibility (efficiency and alignment) for body such as QQI or the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning.<br><br>HEI level: provision, publicising and maintenance of web resource. Training provided for staff. | Content creation and web design.<br><br>Training (e.g. through T&L unit). |
| Person assessing the learner work must be provided with adequate support (listed above).<br><br>More complex investigations may require additional or specialised support. | Materials and training for academic staff<br><br>Provision of expert investigators or assistance when required (e.g. suspected plagiarism in doctoral thesis) |
| All academic staff; academic quality assurance infrastructure. | All staff members and learners must be aware of the relevant policy and procedures. These should be disseminated in UDL-accessible form and training for staff, and academic support for learners, should be provided. |
| Assessor for Level 1 infringements.<br><br>Staff with specialist expertise for Level 2 and 3 infringements.<br><br>HEI should ensure that this principle is included in its academic integrity policy and that it is fully understood by learners and staff. | Those responsible for the implementation of policy need to ensure that the legal framework is clear to all.<br><br>Specific legal advice may be required by institutions in particularly consequential cases (e.g. where suspension, expulsion or withholding of an award is a potential outcome). |
| Investigator(s) – who this is will depend upon the level of the infringement. | The HEI will need to develop a process for appointment, training, monitoring and regular debriefing of academic integrity investigators. |

| Guiding principle (TEQSA (2020)) | Example |
|---|---|
| **6. Collect evidence:** Accumulate a range of evidence that clearly and convincingly establishes the firm belief that a breach is not only probable, but highly probable. Two forms of evidence are critical:<br><br>a) Textual evidence<br><br>b) Knowledge of the learner's academic and linguistic abilities | Based on the language used in an assessment, a lecturer is concerned about the potential that academic misconduct has occurred. This is reinforced by the outcome of a similarity report. The assessor checks the assessment text against other texts and comes to the belief that a purchased essay has been submitted. The assessor summarises this information and it is passed on to the relevant investigator(s). |
| **7. Use experience:** Decide how much weight to give to each piece of evidence, based on common sense, everyday experience, and experience of previous academic integrity breach cases. | Investigators use a range of text-matching tools to identify where academic misconduct has potentially occurred. Use bank of recorded knowledge to identify possible sources or mechanisms for text copying. |
| **8. Ensure natural justice:** Allow the learner to have an opportunity to explain and demonstrate, either in person (face to face/ teleconference) or in writing, how they developed their assignment. Ensure the learner is supported appropriately in this process. Record the meeting carefully for future reference. | Learner about whom there is concern is invited to attend meeting with members of the investigation team. Accompanied by a support person from the students' union, they explain how they came to produce the material in their assignment. The investigator(s) outline what they have found. The independent chair of the meeting writes up agreed minutes of the meeting and these are made available to a disciplinary hearing. |
| **9. Evaluate:** Weigh up all the evidence to form an overall picture that provides clear and convincing evidence on the 'balance of probability' that cheating has or has not occurred. | Documentation is passed to an adjudication panel that decides on any educative and/or disciplinary steps to be taken, within context of relevant HEI policy and procedures. All documentation is securely and confidentially stored and archived as appropriate, in compliance within GDPR guidelines. |

| Responsibility | Resources required |
|---|---|
| Assessor in the first instance.<br><br>Investigator(s) will review and seek additional evidence if needed. | The HEI will need to provide training and support to assessors, as outlined above.<br><br>The HEI will need to develop a process for the appointment, training, monitoring and regular debriefing of Academic Integrity investigator(s). |
| Investigator(s) | The HEI will need to develop a process for appointment, training, monitoring and regular debriefing of AI investigators.<br><br>The HEI will need to provide access to proprietary investigation tools, which will require procurement of appropriate licenses. |
| Investigator(s) and HEI | HEI must ensure that an appropriate procedure is in place and that it is made known to all learners and staff.<br><br>Responsibility for convening meetings of investigator(s) and learner needs to be allocated to staff member(s) and resources identified to allow meeting to take place and to be properly recorded and documented. |
| Section within HEI that is responsible for 'managing' academic integrity cases | Secure archiving and recording system to be established for incidences of academic misconduct.<br><br>Person(s) to be identified within HEI that have responsibility for overall management of AI processes and this/these person(s) to be provided with adequate resources, support and training to engage in this. |

The University of California San Diego provides a resource to aid staff in evaluating different forms of evidence that might point to academic misconduct (UCSD (2020)). While the resource focuses on contract cheating, a modified version, Table 2, is provided here to address a broader variety of misconduct. Similarly, Table 3 provides a modified rubric to aid in detection of learner academic misconduct.

## Table 2: Sample Matrix to Aid Detection of Academic Misconduct in Writt

| Evidence | Why This Can Be Considered Evidence | Limitations of th |
|---|---|---|
| **Document properties:**<br><br>Strange document properties: e.g., few minutes of editing time, no author name, author name different from the learner's, or a different author name on each assessment. | If the properties are blank, this means that they could have been intentionally stripped from the document. | If the learner wrote their p Docs and then download to submit, there will be n indicated.<br><br>If the learner doesn't own computer and must borr computers, the author in might change. |
| **Quality of the writing:**<br><br>The assessment is ' too good to be true' because it is written at a higher level than expected for that individual learner or for learners in that class. | While learners can improve their writing over the course of a semester, significant improvements from one assessment to another (e.g., whole letter grades) or large gaps in understanding between one assessment (out-of-class) and another (in-class) are uncommon. | The learner could have:<br><br>a) worked hard on one pa it better than their other<br><br>b) had legitimate help or from a university writing service; or<br><br>c) had a stellar secondar which puts them heads a above the rest. |
| **Language or concepts used:**<br><br>The language, ideas and/or readings used in the assessment were not covered in class. | In cases of contract cheating, there may be extensive use of materials other than those the learner was directed to use in writing the assignment.<br><br>In plagiarism cases, the language/ phrasing used may be different to what you would expect from the learner. A similarity check software will usually identify this. | The learner could have st topic in another class or |

## en Assignments

| is Evidence | Suggested Types of Questions | Making Sense of the Answer |
|---|---|---|
| paper in Google ed it to Word o properties<br><br>n their own ow others' formation | On which platform did you write this paper?<br><br>Whose computer did you use? | If they answer Word or their own computer, it may suggest that they didn't write the paper themselves.<br><br>If they answer Google Docs, ask them to show you their Google Doc including all the versions created as they worked on the paper. |
| paper, making papers.<br><br>n the paper support<br><br>y education and shoulders | Your use of language and your writing ability are surprising for someone at your level,<br>I'd like to hear more about your process of writing this assessment…<br><br>a) and why it differs so much from your other assessments?<br><br>b) Did you receive help from anyone on this assessment?<br><br>c) and how you learned to write this well! | If the learner cannot describe their process or explain the differences, it may suggest that they did not write the paper themselves.<br><br>If they said that they received ' help' , you will need to probe more about that 'help'. What help was used? What kind of things were done to help (e.g., translate your paper, rewrite sentences,  add material, correct grammar)? |
| tudied this on their own. | It's a very interesting topic/theme/angle you chose to explore, how did you go about choosing it?<br><br>I find it odd that you didn't use any of the readings assigned to you in this class, choosing instead to only use other sources. Please tell us your process for choosing your sources, including your rationale for doing so. | If the learner cannot explain the sources or how they chose them, it may suggest that they didn't write the paper themselves. |

| Table 2: Sample Matrix to Aid Detection of Academic Misconduct in Writt | | |
|---|---|---|
| Evidence | Why This Can Be Considered Evidence | Limitations of th |
| **Unusual word choices:** The specific word choices used in the assessment are unusual or particularly sophisticated | In papers provided by contract cheating providers or in materials copied directly from another source, words/ phrases are often used that are not common for the class (because the writer didn't attend the class) or are more sophisticated than expected. | If there is only one asses evidence, this could just the learner's style. |
| **Content not focused on the brief:** The assessment doesn't  address the prompt | If a learner buys a pre-written essay (cheaper than a custom essay), the paper may not fully address the prompt. Even if it was a custom essay, often contract cheating providers will not fully attend to the assignment brief. | Learners who are struggl with the course content o paper that does not addr |
| **Handwriting:** The handwriting differs from assessment to assessment | A person's handwriting does not change significantly from occasion to occasion. If the ways in which the person writes the letters in their name, for example, change from one assessment to another, this suggests two different writers. | Perhaps the learner is am and wrote one assessme left hand and one with th is definitely not ' more lil though) |

## en Assignments

| is Evidence | Suggested Types of Questions | Making Sense of the Answer |
|---|---|---|
| sment as be indicative of | In the assessment, you used X word/phrase and it was just a unique choice.<br><br>Can you tell me more about your use of that word and how you decided to use it? | If the learner cannot define or describe their word choices, or use them again in a sentence, it may suggest that they didn't write the paper themselves or have copied from other sources. |
| ing academically could write a ess the prompt. | Can you tell me why your paper does not address the assignment brief? | If the learner cannot adequately explain to your satisfaction why they wrote a paper that does not address the brief, it may suggest that the paper is not entirely their own work. |
| mbidextrous ent with their heir right! (This kely than not', | Please write your name.<br><br>Can you tell me why your handwriting is so different in these two assessments?<br><br>Choose a concept from the assessment and ask the learner to explain it. | This piece of evidence may be easy to 'fake', because a learner could practice writing to match the handwriting used in the assessment, or study the concepts ahead of the review. |

## Table 3: Sample Rubric to Aid Detection of Academic Misconduct in Writt

| Textual signals or evidence | Why is this a potenti |
| --- | --- |
| Very low text match (0 – 5%) | Scholarly work cites sources, so it is unlikely to have a text-match to lower the similarity score to avoid checks. |
| High text match (>30%) | Commercial 'bespoke' assignments can be cut and pasted from s |
| High text match (other learner's work) | Assignments obtained from file-sharing sites or other learners are |
| Document properties e.g. author / creation date / editing time / version number | The metadata of a Word document may indicate an author name short editing time. If the learner suggests that the assessment wa 'fresh' version, they should be able to provide drafts and other evi |
| Not appropriate to discipline area | The writing and content are at odds with language typical to the d assignment. |
| Quality different to or above expectations | A mismatch between the assignment quality (language use, conte previous work (e.g. assignments, exams, online and in-class work) |
| Language use and ability | A mismatch between the language used in the assignment and th interpersonal interactions, online, in previous assignments, exam |
| Unreadable language, including jargon-filled sentences  and misuse of words | Online 'article spinners', translation and/or paraphrasing tools ca writing that bypass text-matching software. This writing sounds e and misuses terms and everyday words. |

## en Assignments (TEQSA (2020)).

| al problem? | Concern | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **None** | **Some** | **High** |
| of 5% or less; the work may have been manipulated | | | |
| ources, despite claims of 'plagiarism free'. | | | |
| e likely to be identified by text-matching software. | | | |
| not matching the learner, an odd creation date, or very as written on a friend's computer, or that it is a final lence. | | | |
| iscipline or that would be expected in the | | | |
| ent knowledge, formatting and style) and the learner's ). | | | |
| ne learner's language use (e.g. in class, in s). | | | |
| automatically transform any text into 'original' xcessively verbose/complicated, makes little sense, | | | |

## Table 3: Sample Rubric to Aid Detection of Academic Misconduct in Writt

| Textual signals or evidence | Why is this a potenti |
|---|---|
| Reference list, but:<br>• No in-text citations<br>• Mismatch with in-text citations<br>• Sources inappropriate/ irrelevant<br>• Access dates for internet sources predate enrolment<br>• References are falsified<br>• References do not meet criteria/ requirements:<br>• Min/max required references<br>• Required references/authors<br>• Date range of references<br>• Referencing style<br>• Excludes key content; includes irrelevant content | Commercial 'bespoke' assignments are often produced quickly by<br>maximizes profit but leads to low quality work. Moreover, learners<br>send minimal task information to the cheating service, overlookir<br>why assignments that are only vaguely relevant to the topic or usi<br>contract cheating.<br><br>Writers may append reference lists without any in-text citations,<br><br>Writers may copy from a published source but neglect to update t<br>so in-text citations may not match the reference list.<br><br>Access dates for internet sources may predate the learner's enrolr<br><br>Some of the references may be false (non-existent) or falsified (do |
| Anything else that seems unusual or concerning? | Trust your instincts as an experienced educator. If something seer<br>academic integrity decision-maker. |

## en Assignments (TEQSA (2020)).

| | Concern | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| al problem? | **None** | **Some** | **High** |
| y (re)using old information from previous jobs. This taking a transactional approach to learning may only ng important details in the assignment brief. That's ng references to odd sources can be classic signs of | | | |
| heir reference list with items cited in the copied text, ment in the course. n't contain the referenced material). | | | |
| ms unusual or 'off', consult a trusted colleague or | | | |

Stage 4:
# Consideration, Classification & Sanction

# Stage 4: Consideration, Classification & Sanction

Following a full investigation, it should be determined if there is a case for consideration. In such instances, it is recommended that the alleged misconduct is classified prior to consideration. This should include reference to mitigation, detailing what this is, if the learner admits to the misconduct.

## Consideration

The following general principles can be applied to consideration of alleged academic misconduct:

- Any learner investigated for academic misconduct should be presumed innocent until proven otherwise, through an investigation and subsequent upholding of a case.

- The investigation of academic misconduct is based on the actions of the learner rather than their submission of a defence of not intending to engage in academic misconduct.

- The principle of consistency, equity and fairness should govern:

  » The management of all investigations conducted.

  » The penalties applied for academic misconduct, with any penalties being aligned with the severity of the academic misconduct and/or the learner's history of engaging in academic misconduct.

- Any investigation of academic misconduct for a learner registered on a programme that leads to a professional registration for which a fitness to practice requirement applies, may be referred to a Fitness to Practice committee in cases of severe academic misconduct and/or where incidences of academic misconduct related to the learner have previously been alleged, investigated, and/or upheld.

- Any committee established should have an independent chair and representatives from learner, academic and management constituencies, as appropriate. Having a consistent chair for a period of time is valuable so that experience can be built up and consistency of decision-making achieved. All panel members should be independent of the matter being investigated.

- The committee / academic integrity investigator may invite relevant individuals to comment on the matter.

- The committee/ academic integrity investigator determines whether an infringement has in fact occurred, the extent of the infringement in relation to insights and explanations provided by relevant individuals and any mitigating circumstances.

- Best practice would ensure that the academic integrity investigator passes the case to another investigator/ committee for sanction or determination to eliminate any perceived bias.

- It is sufficient to establish that academic misconduct has occurred based on 'the balance of probabilities' rather than 'beyond all reasonable doubt'.

- Independent well-being support should be offered to the learner and the learner should be permitted to bring a support person to any meeting.

- A transparent independent appeal system should be in place.

The following sample flowchart summarises the usual series of stages in the full investigation, classification, consideration & sanction of academic misconduct. It has been adapted from City, University of London's Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Guidance (City (2020) (by permission through Quality and Qualifications Ireland) and adjusted to the Irish context.

There should be a formal process for recording of any learner infringement where misconduct has been determined, including checking any previous infringements on the part of the learner. Following a determination of academic misconduct, an HEI-level appeals process, considered by a separate committee, should be available.
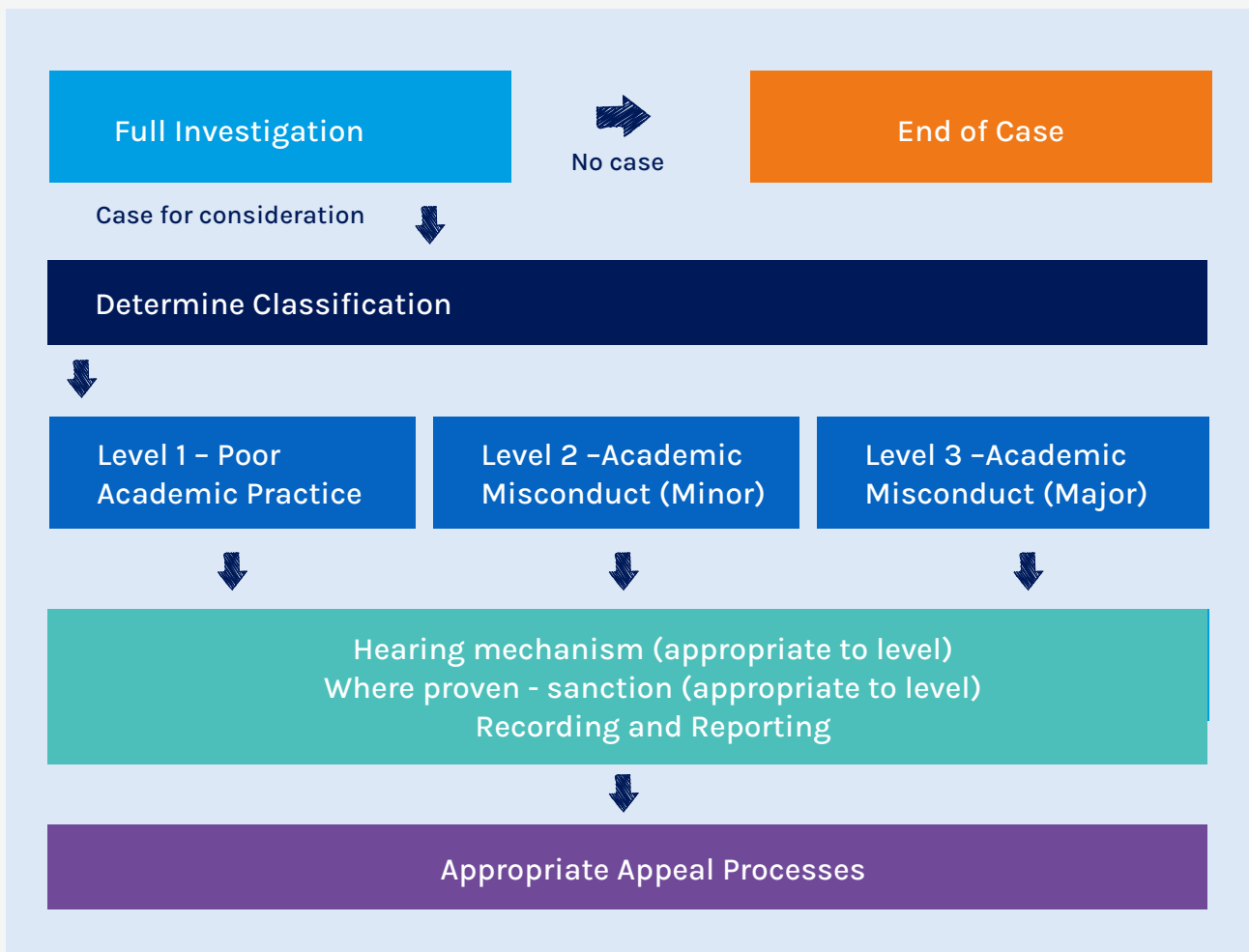


Figure 8 Key steps in the full investigation, consideration, classification, & sanction of academic misconduct

# Classification of Alleged Academic Misconduct Severity

The National Academic Integrity Network Lexicon can support a classification of the form of academic misconduct such as:

- Cheating

- Collusion

- Contract cheating.

- Data fabrication

- Data falsification

- Impersonation

- Plagiarism.

- Self-plagiarism

- Unauthorised content generation[1]

The severity of academic misconduct can then be classified e.g.:

- Level 1: Poor academic practice/conduct

- Level 2: Academic misconduct (minor infringement)

- Level 3: Severe academic misconduct (major infringement).

It is important to note that, while practice varies across the sector, level 1 infringements are often managed at a local level (e.g., within the academic department), and level 2 and level 3 cases are often referred to a panel for management at institutional level. Academic misconduct within examination settings is typically not considered a level 1 infringement.

In determining the level of severity of misconduct, considerations may include:

- the nature of the alleged offence e.g., a poor approach to referencing vs contract cheating;

- the stage that the learner is at in the programme;

- the assessment modality;

- if the assessment was low-stakes or high-stakes;

- if this was a first or subsequent offence;

- any extenuating circumstances.

A desk review undertaken by NAIN found that, in some institutions, scoring systems are used as the basis for determining classification. In some institutions, decisions on classification, are designated to individuals e.g., a plagiarism advisor or academic integrity coordinator. Their role in assessing the case can vary from advising to adjudicating in respect of classification (Griffith (2015); UCD (2020a)). However, the approach often adopted is that an assessor or lecturer decides on the classification in the first instance (DCU (2020)).

---

1  Although a definition of Unauthorised Content Generation is not included in the Lexicon, at the time of publication of this Framework, the definition of ' the production of academic work, in whole or part, for academic credit, progression or award, whether or not a payment or other favour is involved, using unapproved or undeclared human or technological assistance' (Foltynek et al., 2023) is adopted.

Typically, the impact of this classification means that lower-level or minor offences are often dealt with within departments or schools, with higher level or repeat offences referred to heads of schools or departments or a designated individual such as the Registrar (University of Manchester (2021)).

The decision to escalate case management can have a very significant impact on the process followed. Some lower-level cases are dealt with between the assessor and learner and some higher-level cases are escalated to formal committees or an academic integrity investigation unit for decision. In many cases, more significant penalties can be applied once the matter is escalated.

## Recommendations:

- Systems should be implemented within HEIs for the classification of offences as:

  » Level 1: Poor scholarly academic practice/conduct

  » Level 2: Academic misconduct (minor infringement)

  » Level 3: Severe academic misconduct (major infringement)

- HEIs may choose to incorporate scoring within their classification systems (see tool below), but may wish to exercise local discretion as to how they categorise cases.

- Classifications may also account for factors such as the learner's stage within the programme, recidivism, extenuating circumstances, where an admission has been made by the learner etc.

- Policies and procedures should outline how the classification of the offence impacts on escalation within the HEI.

- Policies and procedures should clarify when escalation is required. Intervention points should be clearly delineated.

# Tools to Support Classification

The Plagiarism Reference Tariff based on the findings of the AMBeR (Academic Misconduct Benchmarking Research) Project  (Tennant &Rowell (2010); Tennant et al (2007, 2008, 2010); UCD (2020b) provides a template for the classification of suspected cases of misconduct and the assignment of penalties in an objective, consistent and transparent manner. The Tariff allows the consideration of several factors in each case of learner misconduct under investigation. Points allocated under each Criterion in the Tariff are added together to get a cumulative score which defines the Level of the infringement. Modifications of this model are currently in use in several Irish universities. A limitation

of this model is that it may be overly focused on plagiarism and would benefit from being more broadly applied to other forms of learner academic misconduct.

The University of California San Diego provides a variation on AMBeR model that does just that (UCSD (2021)). This modification is further refined here, in Table 4, as a guide for Irish higher education providers. It takes account of the work already carried out by the NAIN, notably the Lexicon of Common Terms and the definitions therein. This is not intended as a prescriptive approach, but rather should be viewed as a tool that institutions might adapt to fit its own needs, structures, and context.

| Table 4: A Tariff Score System to Determine the Level of Academic Infringement | | |
|---|---|---|
| A learner assignment is any piece of academic work to be completed by learners for the purposes of academic grading including but not limited to examinations, in-class assessments, take home assignments, problems, or project work. Descriptors in bold text are derived from NAIN's 'Academic Integrity: National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms' which in turn may derive from definitions used internationally as referenced in the Lexicon. | | |
| Criterion #1 Number of previous violations | | |
| The guidelines support the principle that cases involving learners with a history of academic integrity violations warrant a more serious disciplinary response. A violation is determined to have occurred when a learner previously accepted responsibility or was held responsible for an academic integrity violation. | | |
| 1st Violation | 20 | |
| 2nd Violation | 50 | |
| 3rd Violation | 100 | |

| Criterion #2: Types of Violations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The guidelines support the principle that more serious violations warrant more serious disciplinary actions. | | | |
| **Basic Violations / Assignment Misconduct** | Basic violations, include, but are not limited to, submitting a portion of the same material more than once without prior authorisation; giving your own academic work to others even when doing so was not explicitly prohibited; attendance/participation points misrepresentation; violation of instructor policies if behaviour not listed elsewhere in the guidelines; poor academic writing skill e.g., poor referencing or the passing off of somebody else's ideas as if originally discovered by the learner, or small errors made through carelessness or misunderstanding | 15 | |
| **Limited Plagiarism** | Limited plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, presenting work / ideas taken from other sources without proper acknowledgement. Paraphrasing from sources without attribution; verbatim copying from sources without attribution when what was copied was not a critical aspect (key, central ideas) of the assignment and was less than 30% of the assignment; looking online for a solution to an assignment and copying that solution/ answer in whole or in part. | 25 | |
| **Extensive Plagiarism** | Extensive plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism when the aspects copied are critical aspects of the assignment and/or constitute more than 30% of the assignment; extensively copying from another learner's assignment without acknowledgment of their contribution; limited or extensive plagiarism that includes false citations. Mosaic copying/ scaffolding/ substantial similarity: An unoriginal piece of writing composed of acknowledged or unacknowledged extracts from several different sources. Where the key points and structure of another person's work have been used as a scaffold (framework) for your own work, without acknowledging the source. This is plagiarism. | 100 | |

| Criterion #2: Types of Violations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The guidelines support the principle that more serious violations warrant more serious disciplinary actions. | | | |
| Collusion | Undisclosed collaboration between two or more people on an assignment or task, which was supposed to be completed individually. Collusion includes unauthorised collaboration; inappropriate or unauthorised collaboration by two or more people in the production and submission of assessment task; learners providing their work to another learner before the submission deadline, or for the purpose of the other learner's plagiarism at any time. Allowing another (e.g., friend / relative / roommate / classmate / tutor) to edit / write / translate one's assignment without acknowledging that help. | 100 | |
| Falsification / Fabrication | Falsification/Fabrication includes, but is not limited to, altering a graded assessment provided by another person and submitting for re-grade; fabricating data for a lab or research assignment; submitting data you didn't yourself collect; lying/giving a false excuse to miss or receive unfair accommodation on an assessment. Types of major misconduct in an education, research or scholarship setting:<br><br>Forging educational, research or scholarship content, images, data, equipment or processes so that they are inaccurately represented.<br><br>Fabrication: Fabrication in the context of research means making up data, experiments, or other significant information in proposing conducting or reporting research. | 125 | |
| Exam Cheating | Intentional cheating: Intentional action or behaviour that violates established rules and gives one learner an unfair advantage over another.<br><br>Exam cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying from another or allowing another to copy during a supervised exam; having an unapproved aid directly related to the exam (e.g., 'cheat sheets'; course-related notes; textbook; whether electronically or hard copy); having ubiquitous smart technology (e.g., cell phone, smart watch) accessible during an exam. | 175 | |

| Fraud / Impersonation | Actions that are intended to deceive for unfair advantage by violating academic regulations.<br><br>Using intentional deception to gain academic credit.<br><br>Fraud includes some of the most egregious violations – e.g. stealing or fraudulently obtaining answers to an assessment prompt/exam before submitting the assessment for grading; changing/helping to change any recorded assignment or course grade on an instructor's or university record; illicitly obtaining an assessment completed by another (without their knowledge) and submitting it (in part or whole) as one's own; submitting fake or false documents (e.g. medical notes). | 225 | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Contract Cheating | Form of academic misconduct when a person uses an undeclared and/or unauthorised third party, online or directly, to assist them to produce work for academic credit or progression, whether or not payment or other favour is involved.<br><br>Contract cheating is any behaviour whereby a learner arranges to have another person or entity ('the provider') complete (in part or total) an assessment (e.g. exam, test, quiz, assignment, paper, project, problems) for the learner. If the provider is also a student, both students are in violation. | 225 | |

## Criterion #3: Stage in the Learner Taught Programme

The guideline supports the principle that learners further along in their academic study should be more knowledgeable about academic integrity. Thus, the seriousness of disciplinary actions increases concurrently with the amount of experience a learner has at the institution.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Year 1 | 25 | |
| Year 2 | 30 | |
| Year 3 | 35 | |
| Year 4+ | 40 | |
| Masters year 1 | 45 | |
| Masters year 2 | 50 | |

## Criterion #4a: Value of the Assessment

The guideline supports the principle that violations are more serious when they occur in more highly valued work. Thus, the seriousness of disciplinary actions increases concurrently with the value of the assessment. The chosen 25% point approximates the value of a midterm exam.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The assessment in question is < 25% of the total marks possible for the module | 20 | |
| The assessment in question is > 25% and < 50% of the total marks possible for the module | 30 | |
| The assessment in question is > 50% of the total marks possible for the module | 50 | |
| The assessment in question is capstone academic work (e.g. undergraduate or master's thesis; dissertation) | 75 | |
| Masters year 1 | 45 | |
| Masters year 2 | 50 | |

| Criterion #4b: Value of the Assessment | | |
|---|---|---|
| The module carries up to 5 ECTS | 15 | |
| The module carries more than 5 ECTS but less than or equal to 10 ECTS | 30 | |
| The module carries more than 10 ECTS – apply 15 points per 5 ECTS | X | |

| Criteria #5: Additional Considerations | | |
|---|---|---|
| The additional considerations address common but atypical situations, such as learners who may have had very specific training in class on academic integrity or learners who have taken action to hide their violation. | | |
| Evidence that the programme/class/instructor offered enhanced academic integrity education to the learners | 25 | |
| Evidence that the learner previously completed academic integrity training through e.g. the academic integrity office / programme content | 50 | |
| Evidence that the learner failed to complete academic integrity training assigned as a result of a previous violation | 75 | |

| Learner total score: Max (* based on a max 30 ECTS module) | 615 | |
|---|---|---|

Classification can be determined based
on the total score as follows:

- Level 1: 0-200

- Level 2: 201-500

- Level 3: 500+

# Sanction

In cases where academic misconduct has been established, steps should be taken to determine an appropriate sanction; this may include educational steps aimed at preventing any further engagement in academic misconduct the learner. It is recommended that the approaches taken constitute a whole-of-institution commitment to academic integrity.  This should ideally encompass the capacity of enrolled learners to engage in good academic practice, and the academic community's role in fostering and modelling best academic practice.

As outlined above, in determining the severity of the alleged academic misconduct, consideration may be given to the following elements:

- The learner's stage of academic advancement;

- The extent of the alleged academic misconduct;

- The evidence available;

- Any Professional, Regulatory, Statutory Body (PRSB) requirements;

- The impact of the alleged misconduct on the candidate's overall result;

- Any admission of guilt;

- Any previous record of academic misconduct.

This points system provides a structured approach driven by an educational agenda. The approach seeks to reinforce positive behaviours by directing all learners who have acted inappropriately to some training in academic integrity, whilst also providing transparent objective criteria to aid scoring and decision making.

## Tools to Support the Determination of Sanctions

Table 5 provides an example of how academic misconduct classifications may be mapped to possible sanctions. It is a modification, for the Irish HEI context, of the Plagiarism Reference Tariff based on the findings of the AMBeR (Academic Misconduct Benchmarking Research) Project (Tennant & Rowell (2010)). It should be noted that the mappings provided are indicative and that determination of appropriate sanction is a matter of academic judgement by the HEI on a case-by-case basis.

| Table 5: Sample Rubric to Map Classifications of Academic Misconduct to Sanctions | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Level 1** (Poor Academic practice / conduct) | **Points range** | **Disciplinary Actions** |
| | 0 - 100 | **Mandatory academic integrity training and one or more of the following sanctions is applied** |
| | | a) Reprimand – a formally recorded warning kept on the learner's record for the duration of the learner's enrolment on the programme of study. |
| | | b) Grade reduction – the work should be graded, but the mark may be reduced. |
| | 101 - 200 | **Mandatory academic integrity training and one or more of the following sanctions is applied** |
| | | a )Reprimand – a formally recorded warning kept on the learner's record for the duration of the learner's enrolment on the programme of study. |
| | | b) Grade reduction – the work should be graded, but the mark may be reduced. |
| | | c) For assignments worth < 50% of the total module marks, require re-examination/assessment within the semester as a first sitting with no cap on module grade. |
| | | d) For assignments worth > 50% of the total module marks, require re-examination/assessment as a supplemental assessment with no cap on the module grade*. |

| Table 5: Sample Rubric to Map Classifications of Academic Misconduct to Sanctions | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Level 2**<br><br>**Academic Misconduct (Minor Infringement)** | **Points range** | **Disciplinary Actions** |
| | 201 - 350 | **Mandatory academic integrity training and one or more of the following sanctions is applied** |
| | | a) Reprimand – a formally recorded warning kept on the learner's record for the duration of the learner's enrolment on the programme of study. |
| | | b) For assignments worth < 50% of the total module marks, require re-examination/assessment within the semester as a first sitting. |
| | | c) For assignments worth < 50% of the total module marks, require re-examination/assessment as a supplemental assessment with no cap on module grade*. |
| | | d) For assignments worth > 50% of the total module marks, require re-examination/assessment as a supplemental assessment with a cap on the module grade*. |
| | 351 - 500 | **Mandatory academic integrity training and one or more of the following sanctions is applied** |
| | | a )Reprimand – a formally recorded warning kept on the learner's record for the duration of the learner's enrolment on the programme of study. |
| | | b)For assignments worth < 50% of the total module marks, require re-examination/assessment within the semester as a first sitting with a cap on module grade. |
| | | c) For assignments worth < 50% of the total module marks, require re-examination/assessment as a supplemental assessment with no cap on module grade. |
| | | d) For assignments worth >50% of the total module marks, require re-examination/assessment as a supplemental assessment with a cap on the module grade*. |

| Level 2 Academic Misconduct (Minor Infringement) | 351 - 500 | e) For assignments worth >50% of the total module marks, require re-examination/assessment as a supplemental assessment with a cap on the module grade and on award classification if at award stage*. |
| | | f) Reduced award classification. . |
| | | g) Recession/withdrawal of award, in line with HEI policies – where an offence is proved after the conferring of the award. |
| Level 3 Severe academic misconduct (Major Infringement) | 501 - 615 | **Mandatory academic integrity training and one or more of the following sanctions is applied** |
| | | a ) Reprimand – a formally recorded warning kept on the learner's record for the duration of the learner's enrolment on the programme of study. |
| | | b ) For assignments worth >50% of the total module marks, require re-examination/assessment as a supplemental assessment with a cap on the module grade and on award classification if at award stage. |
| | | c) Award of zero for the module mark and credits awarded for progression, with an opportunity to resit the assessment. |
| | | d) Award a 'fail' mark for the assessment component with an opportunity to resubmit the assessment for grading. If passed, credit for the module will be awarded in recognition of the learning outcomes being met, but a module mark of pass only will be recorded. |
| | | e) Award zero for the module mark and associated credits awarded for progression – failure in the assessment component with no opportunity to resubmit the assessment for grading. The learner is suspended from the programme but may be awarded a lower NFQ level award commensurate with other learning outcomes achieved during the programme. This sanction should not normally be applied to foundation or year one undergraduate learners or year 1 international learners. |

| Level 3<br><br>Severe academic misconduct (Major Infringement) | 501 - 615 | f) Award zero for the module mark and remove all credits achieved – the learner is suspended from the programme but may be awarded a lower NFQ level award in recognition of other learning outcomes achieved during the programme. |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | | g) Learner at award stage is exited with a reduced NFQ level award commensurate with learning achieved through legitimate means. |
| | | i) Suspension for academic dishonesty is listed on transcript during the length of the suspension. |
| | | j) Recession/withdrawal of award, in line with HEI policies – where an offence is proved after the conferring of the award |

*For these options, where the learner is at an award stage, the adjudicator should consider whether this will also limit the award classification in cases where HEI assessment regulations might require that a failing grade at award stage will result in a pass award only. The adjudicator(s) should also consider whether this is proportionate to the severity of offence.*
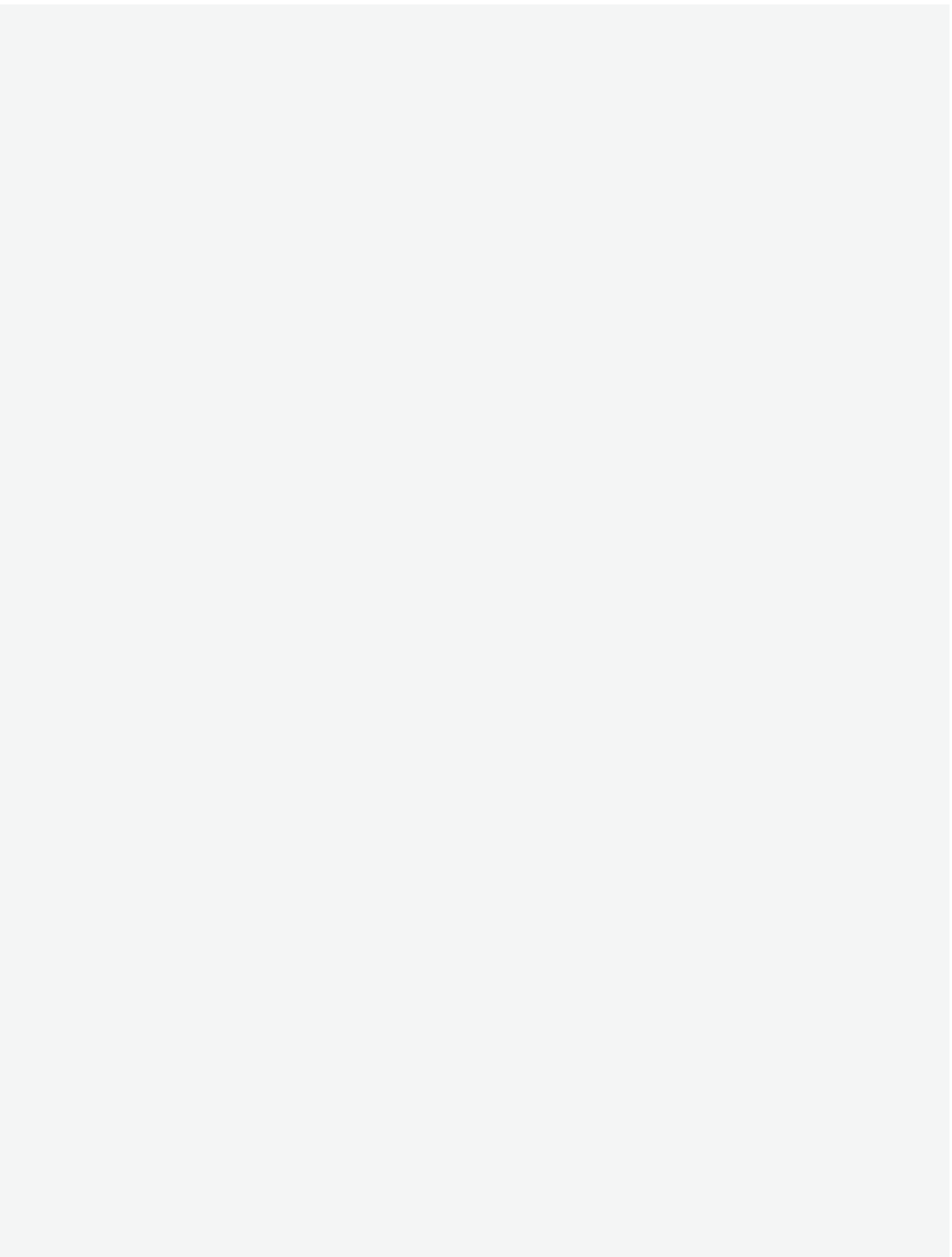
Stage 5:
**Recording and Reporting**
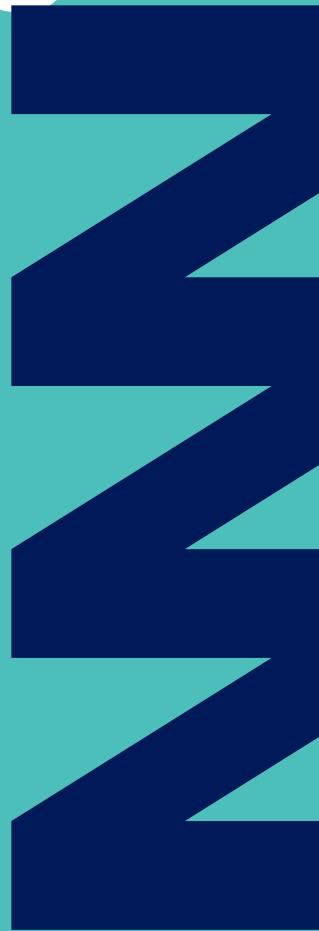
# Stage 5: Recording and Reporting

The NAIN Academic Integrity Guidelines (NAIN (2021a)) set out the importance of maintaining detailed records of academic misconduct to inform effective prevention policy approaches. Maintaining records on academic misconduct is therefore essential for quality assurance and enhancement purposes. Regular review of this database should inform annual monitoring and review processes at department / school and institutional level; enhancements to academic practice and the prevention and management of infringements.

At national level, a standardised approach to collating recorded information will facilitate institutional reporting, which can in turn be used to inform national policy.

It is therefore strongly recommended that:

- A recording system for all cases of academic misconduct, in particular those brought to the full-investigation stage, is maintained centrally within HEIs.

- Such systems must be cognisant of GDPR requirements. Therefore, HEIs are advised to conduct Data Protection Impact Assessments, as appropriate.

- The nature and form of records should be driven by the purpose of the record – e.g., at school level, records may be used to identify repeat instances, at institutional level, records may be used to inform assessment strategy. Institutions should consider which information is most appropriately stored at local (school, department) level and which should be stored centrally.

- In many institutions, it may be appropriate to collate only anonymised data at institutional level. However,

some institutions may choose to hold a central online recording system – e.g., in institutions where learners undertake their studies across departments or schools. Typically, access to these systems is limited to key identified personnel.

- Institutional records should include all of those cases escalated to the full-investigation stage, including where – ultimately – no case is brought forward for consideration. Where no case is brought forward, records should be anonymised.

- All recording policies and procedures should be mindful of the GDPR implications of retaining data in relation to minor infringements. This is to ensure that data is captured to track serial infringement without compromising a learner's record unnecessarily.

- Record-keeping should be aligned with any national reporting system proposed or implemented.

Systems should also be implemented to ensure the appropriate reporting of academic misconduct that is aligned with quality assurance or enhancement processes.

# A Tool to Support Education & Awareness

- A sample academic misconduct report is provided below with sample numbers.  This can be expanded to inform local policy decisions by the inclusion of details on the learner profile:

- undergraduate/postgraduate

- fulltime/part-time

- national/international

- male/female

- mature/CAO entry

| Table 6: Sample Academic Misconduct Report | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Collusion** **Falsification / Fabrication** | **Academic Year:      Department:** | | | |
| | **Category:** | Full investigation initiated | | For |
| | | Local | Central | Loca |
| **Level 1** | **Poor academic practice / conduct (0-200 points)** Examples: Collusion Contract Cheating Data Fabrication or Falsification Plagiarism or Self-Plagiarism Cheating (other than contract cheating for example, facilitation of cheating) | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| **Level 2** | **Academic misconduct (Minor Infringement) (201-500 points)** Examples: Collusion Contract Cheating Data Fabrication or Falsification Impersonation Plagiarism or Self-Plagiarism Cheating (other than contract cheating for example, facilitation of cheating) | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| | Exam cheating | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| **Level 3** | **Severe academic misconduct  (Major Infringement) (500+ points)** Examples: Collusion Contract Cheating Data Fabrication or Falsification Impersonation Plagiarism or Self-Plagiarism Cheating (other than contract cheating for example, facilitation of cheating) | | | |
| | Exam cheating | | | |
| | **Totals** | | | |

Note: 'Local' indicates Departmental or School level; 'Central' indicates Faculty or Institutional level

| | | Incidence | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| mal consideration (e.g. hearing) | | Imposition of sanction and detail of sanction | Appeal | Successful appeals |
| al | Central | | | |
| | 1 | | 0 | 0 |
| | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | 10 | | 0 | 0 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Stage 6:
# Review

# Stage 6: Review

In keeping with good practice, policies and procedures should be subject to periodic review and enhancement based on learnings from the period under review and informed by national and international best practice.

The regular review of policies and processes in the case management of academic misconduct is one of the pillars of the Academic Integrity Conceptual Framework. There are five core elements of exemplary academic integrity policy identified by Bretag et al (2012), which include:

**1. Access**: The policy is easy to locate, easy to read, well written, clear and concise. The policy uses plain English, logical headings, provides links to relevant resources and the entire policy is downloadable as an easy-to-print and easy-to-read document.

**2. Approach:** Academic integrity is viewed as an educative process and is referred to in the introductory sections to provide a context for the policy. There is a clear statement of purpose and values with a genuine and coherent institutional commitment to academic integrity through all aspects of the policy.

**3. Responsibility:** The policy has a clear outline of responsibilities for all relevant stakeholders, including university management, academic and professional staff and learners.

**4. Support:** Systems are in place to enable the implementation of the academic integrity policy including procedures, resources, modules, training, seminars and professional development activities to facilitate staff and learner awareness and understanding of policy.

**5. Detail:** Processes are detailed with a clear list of objective outcomes, and the contextual factors relevant to decisions in cases of academic integrity breach are outlined. The policy provides a detailed description of a range of academic integrity breaches and explains those breaches using easy-to-understand classifications or levels of severity. Extensive (but not excessive) detail is provided in relation to reporting, recording, confidentiality and the appeals process.
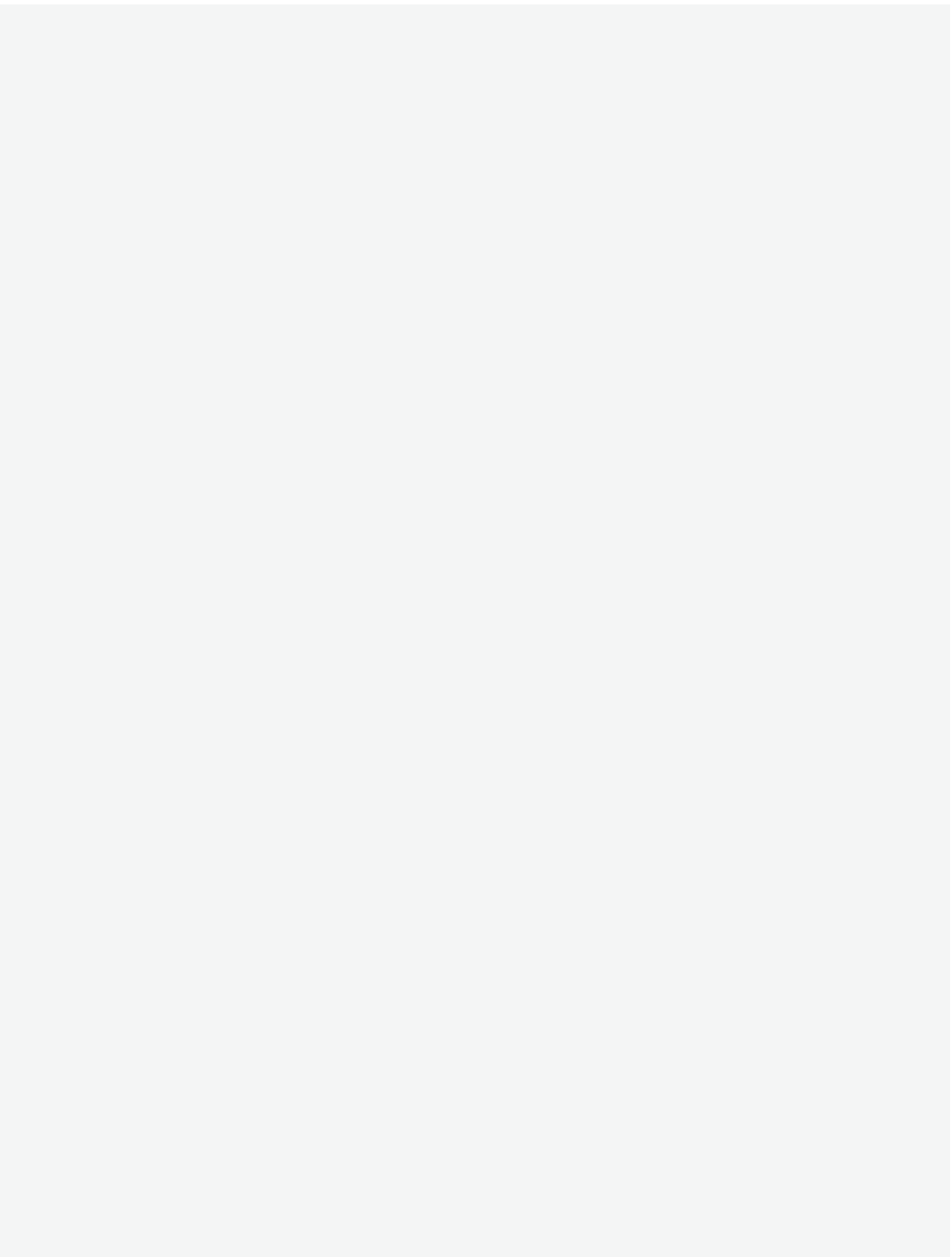
# APPENDIX
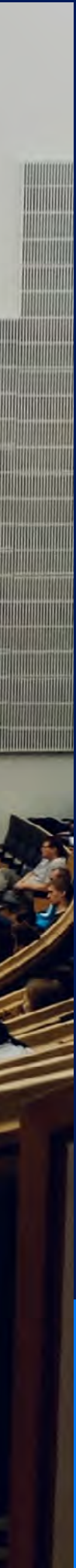
# Working Group Membership

The Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management was developed by the following NAIN Working Group members, led by the Co-Chairs, Dr Yvonne Kavanagh (SETU) and Aisling Reast, (RCSI), both of whom are also members of the NAIN Steering Committee. It was developed, supported by extensive advice and comments from the NAIN membership, and produced following an external consultation with national tertiary education stakeholders from which extensive and very useful feedback was received.

| NAIN Working Group 1 Membership | |
| --- | --- |
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| Aisling Reast, Co-Chair | RCSI, University of Medicine & Health Sciences |
| Frances O'Connell | Technological University Shannon (Athlone) |
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| Brendan Ryder | Dundalk Institute of Technology |
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| Perry Share | Atlantic Technological University (Sligo) |
| Jason Healy | ICD Business School |
| Hugh McBride | Atlantic Technological University (Mayo) |
| Angelica Risquez | University of Limerick |
| Michael Hall | Munster Technological University |
| Fiona O'Riordan | Dublin City University |
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| Mary Goode | Technological University Shannon (Athlone) |
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# NOTES:

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