



National Academic Integrity Network

Terms of Reference 2023-2024

Background

Recent years have seen the rise of an understanding of the importance of academic integrity within higher education. This raised awareness has been driven by new technologies and the activities of online companies, internationally and nationally, offering services to students which facilitate cheating, either with payment for production of assignments - contract cheating - or other similar services, such as file-sharing. The unauthorised use of new technologies such as AI tools and the facilitation of learner cheating have been recognised by QQI and Higher Education Institutions as a growing threat to the integrity of Irish higher education. Legislation¹ was introduced in 2019 providing for the prosecution of those who facilitate cheating by learners; who advertise cheating services; and who publish advertisements for cheating services. QQI is responsible for bringing prosecutions under this legislation.

The National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) is a peer network of higher education institutions and associated organisations established to foster a national understanding of academic integrity and what it means in the higher education context. The network aims to inform, educate, support positive behavioural change, and explore effective ways to cultivate and promote practices consistent with the imperatives of academic integrity.

Objectives

The Network is focused on actively supporting higher education institutions in

- embedding a culture of academic integrity and
- addressing the challenges faced in maintaining academic integrity.

To this end, the Network works to identify and advise on appropriate measures institutions can take to

¹ Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019;
<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2018/95/>

inform and educate staff, students and all stakeholders on academic integrity matters, and to develop approaches that support academic integrity throughout all stages of higher education and areas of activity.

The purpose of the Network is to advise and offer guidance on:

- agreed principles of academic integrity;
- a lexicon of common terms and definitions in the field of academic integrity;
- the current landscape of academic integrity in Irish higher education;
- the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in upholding and addressing academic integrity, including HEIs, staff, students, and QQI;
- a strategy for HEIs to engage with staff and learners as key partners in embedding a culture of academic integrity;
- key elements of a dedicated communication strategy for stakeholders;
- good practice with regard to upholding academic integrity, including on mechanisms: for preventing academic misconduct; for detecting academic misconduct on a timely basis if it does occur; and for constructive intervention to address instances of academic misconduct in a fair, consistent and transparent manner;
- procedures for recording and reporting instances of cheating within HEIs that are offences under the 2019 legislation;
- areas for dedicated enhancement activity and capacity building to support the nurturing of a culture of academic integrity in Irish HEIs, e.g., through a series of webinars and other events.

The Network has a further role in terms of raising awareness of academic integrity and related issues to other relevant stakeholders.

The Network may establish working groups for the purpose of meeting these objectives.

Membership

The network comprises nominated members from the following HEIs and organisations:

- Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA)
- Irish Universities Association (IUA)
- Technological Higher Education Association (THEA)
- National Forum for Research Integrity (NFRI)
- National Tertiary Office
- A Chair of the Network
- HEI representatives nominated by their Registrar (or equivalent) from each publicly regulated higher education institution, and a number of private colleges which provide QQI awards¹
- Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD)
- Irish Council for International Students (ICOS)
- Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education in Ireland (PCHEI)
- Librarians' Association of Ireland (LAI)
- Student Affairs Ireland (SAI)
- SU members from public and private HEIs across Ireland
- Representatives from the Union of Students in Ireland
- National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP)
- QQI

The Network may invite observers to meetings/parts of meetings, as appropriate to its work. It may also advise related agencies and departments of work ongoing or recently completed, e.g., DFHERIS, SOLAS,

¹ A Registrar may nominate members as they see fit to ensure that the institution's interests are best addressed, preferably reflecting the diverse roles of academic staff, learner support services, professional development staff, and HEI leadership in academic integrity matters.

HEA, NFETL. QQI acts as the coordinator of the Network and provides administrative support. The NAIN Chair is appointed by QQI in consultation with representatives of the higher education sector.

Governance

Governance of the Network is provided by a Steering Committee comprising the NAIN Chair, Working Group Chairs/ Co-Chairs/ Deputy Chairs, and the QQI Academic Integrity Executive. The Steering Committee meets prior to plenary Network meetings to agree the agenda and to discuss any issues arising and at other times as required.

Meetings

Plenary meetings are scheduled approximately every two months during the academic year. NAIN members are invited and encouraged to actively participate in these meetings. The meeting outcomes are disseminated within their institutions and organisations by the NAIN member(s).

Shortly after each meeting the key points as agreed are circulated by email to all NAIN members. A detailed note of each meeting is circulated at a later stage.

Methodology

The Network may convene working groups to achieve its objectives. Each Working Group has a Chair, a Co or deputy Chair as needed, and holds its own meetings. QQI provides administrative support for the meetings as required.

Each Working Group has its own ToRs which are published on the NAIN website. Working groups produce material for the consideration and agreement of the overall Network membership.

Communication

Meetings and communications with the Network are managed by QQI through the academicintegrity@qqi.ie email address. All communications, including meeting invitations, minutes, news items, etc., are circulated through this address to members and other stakeholders as agreed. QQI also hosts the NAIN webpage: [National Academic Integrity Network \(qqi.ie\)](http://NationalAcademicIntegrityNetwork(qqi.ie)). Information on the NAIN meetings, minutes, meeting agendas, activities, links to upcoming events (and recording of previous events) are published here.

Term of office

The Terms of Reference for the network are reviewed annually in light of objectives for the coming twelve months. Each HEI Registrar is invited to affirm, change, or add to their NAIN members at the end of each academic year.



Working Group 4

Terms of Reference 2023-2024

Implementation and Review of NAIN Guidance

Background

The National Academic Integrity Network was established in November 2019. In adopting a strategy for the period 2022-2024, two significant objectives were identified, Implementation and Resources and working groups have been established to address these areas.

Working Group 4 will:

- Periodically review NAIN guidance documents to reflect emergent issues and best practice;
- Update the National Lexicon guided by national and international developments;
- Identify and initiate relevant areas of academic integrity research that can contribute to practice and policy development.

Membership

The working group is convened by co-Chairs, Dr Yvonne Kavanagh, South-East Technological University (Carlow) and Aisling Reast, Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI) and is made up of NAIN representatives.

The Working Group Chairs may seek to invite experts from outside the Network to support its work based on need and expertise.

Communication

Meetings and communications with the National Academic Integrity Network will be facilitated by QQI. Meeting minutes and any other related information or outputs produced by the working group will be circulated to the National Academic Integrity Network as appropriate. Final outputs of the working group will be ratified by the National Academic integrity Network before wider circulation. For efficiency, changes to the scope of the working group or its activities may be approved by the Chair in between plenary meetings of the Network.

Term of Office

The working group will initially meet in early 2023 and will continue to meet thereafter as necessary and appropriate.



Working Group 5

Terms of Reference 2023-2024

Capacity Building and Professional Development

Background

The National Academic Integrity Network was established in November 2019. In adopting a strategy for the period 2022-2024, two significant objectives were identified, Implementation and Resources and working groups have been established to address these areas.

Working Group 5 will:

- Facilitate the development of an accessible repository of digital resources to support practices that enhance academic integrity;
- Evaluate and collate existing resources for inclusion in a national repository;
- Identify needs for resource development at institutional and discipline levels and, where appropriate, coordinate related sectoral developments;
- Facilitate the delivery of relevant webinars, masterclasses, workshops, etc for the higher education community.

Membership

The working group is convened by Dr Iain MacLaren, University of Galway and is made up of NAIN representatives.

The Working Group may invite experts from outside the Network to support its work based on need and expertise.

Meetings

The working group will meet at least once every two months or more frequently if required.

Communication

Meetings and communications with the National Academic Integrity Network will be facilitated by QOI. Meeting minutes and any other related information or outputs produced by the working group will be circulated to the National Academic Integrity Network as appropriate. Final outputs of the working group will be ratified by the National Academic integrity Network before wider circulation. For efficiency, changes to the scope of the working group or its activities may be approved by the Chair in between plenary meetings of the Network.

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