Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

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1. Introduction

William College (the College) is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity in learning, teaching, assessment, and research. Academic integrity is fundamental to the credibility of the College's qualifications and to the development of students as ethical scholars and professionals.

This policy sets out the principles, expectations, and procedures through which William College promotes academic integrity and addresses academic misconduct. It reflects sector best practice and aligns with Partner University policies and UK higher education expectations, including those articulated by Bath Spa University and Birkbeck, University of London.

The College recognises that students come from diverse educational backgrounds and therefore adopts a balanced approach that combines education, support, and proportionate disciplinary action. While minor breaches may be addressed developmentally, deliberate, repeated, or serious breaches of academic integrity are treated as academic misconduct and may result in formal sanctions.

2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the Academic Integrity & Misconduct Policy is to:

- Safeguard academic standards by ensuring that all assessed work submitted by students is their own and appropriately acknowledges the contributions of others.
- Promote a culture of honesty, responsibility, and ethical scholarly practice across all programmes of study.
- Provide clear guidance on expectations for students and staff regarding academic conduct and the consequences of breaches.
- Ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency in the investigation and resolution of suspected academic misconduct.
- Support student development by combining preventative education with proportionate responses to misconduct.

By clarifying expectations and procedures, the policy protects the integrity of William College qualifications while also supporting students' learning and personal development.

This policy applies to all students enrolled at William College, all forms of assessment, all modes of study, and all staff involved in assessment and quality assurance. It may also apply after graduation where and if new evidence emerges.

3. Definitions

The list below is not exhaustive.

Term	Definition
Academic Integrity	refers to the expectation that all academic work is undertaken with honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for others, and that students take personal accountability for the work they submit for assessment.
Poor Academic Practices	refers to minor breaches of academic conventions that arise from limited understanding, experience, or technical skill. This may include inaccurate referencing or weak paraphrasing where there is no clear intention to deceive and is normally addressed through feedback.
Academic Misconduct	refers to any action, or attempted action, that gives a student an unauthorised or unfair academic advantage, or that undermines the integrity, credibility, or reputation of William College, its Partner Universities, or its assessment processes. This includes actions that advantage the student themselves or others.

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Plagiarism	occurs when a student presents the words, ideas, data, or creative work of another source as their own without appropriate acknowledgement. This may include copying, translating, paraphrasing without citation, using unattributed quotations, or reproducing diagrams, images, code, or data without referencing the original source. A lack of understanding of referencing requirements is not considered an acceptable explanation.
Self-Plagiarism	refers to the reuse of a student's own previously submitted work, in whole or in part, for a new assessment without disclosure, permission, or appropriate referencing. Approved resubmissions of failed work are excluded from this definition.
Collusion	occurs when a student works with others on an assessment that is intended to be completed independently or submits work as their own that has been produced with or by another person. Where group work is permitted, students must comply fully with the assessment brief and programme guidance.
Contract Cheating	involves submitting work for assessment that has been produced wholly or partly by another person or organisation, whether paid or unpaid. This includes work completed by friends, family members, other students, private tutors, or commercial essay-writing services.
Misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	where AI tools are used in a way that replaces, misrepresents, or obscures a student's own academic work. This may include submitting AI-generated text, code, images, or designs as original work without acknowledgement, or relying on AI tools in ways that breach assessment instructions or module guidance. The appropriate use of AI may include activities such as grammar checking, idea generation, or initial brainstorming, provided such use is transparent, acknowledged where required, and does not substitute the student's own critical thinking or authorship. A lack of awareness of appropriate AI use is not considered a valid defence.

4. Responsibilities within William College

Department/ Individual	Responsibilities
Students	Understand and follow integrity expectations, attend training, and seek guidance on referencing
Academic Staff	Provide clear instructions, use detection tools, and report suspected cases
Module Leaders	Conduct initial investigations and escalate where needed
Registry, Data and Compliance Team	Maintain records, track repeat offences, ensure consistency
Academic Board	Monitor patterns and direct policy revisions

5. Procedures

Academic integrity requires students to ensure that all work submitted for assessment is their own and completed in accordance with the principles of honesty, fairness, and respect. William College is committed to supporting students to meet these expectations while ensuring that any concerns are addressed consistently, transparently, and in line with the Partner University's requirements.

5.1 Identifications and Initial Review

Responsibility: William College Module Leader / Marker
Timescale: Normally within 10 working days of identification

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Concerns regarding potential breaches of academic integrity may be identified through the marking or moderation process, plagiarism detection tools, examination invigilation, reports from External Examiners, or referrals from students or staff.

Where a concern is identified, the member of staff responsible for the assessment must complete an Alleged Academic Misconduct Form and compile relevant supporting evidence.

The Module Leader will undertake an initial review of the concern to determine whether it indicates poor academic practice or whether there is sufficient evidence to suggest potential academic misconduct. At this stage, William College's role is undertaking the identification, evidence gathering, and academic judgement at a preliminary level. No formal determination of academic misconduct or penalties will be made by the College.

5.2 Local Resolution of Poor Academic Practice

Responsibility: William College Module Leader / Programme Team
Timescale: Normally concluded within 20 working days

Where the Module Leader determines that the concern reflects poor academic practice rather than academic misconduct, the matter will be addressed locally through the marking and feedback process. Poor academic practice may include inaccurate referencing, excessive paraphrasing, or misunderstanding of academic conventions where there is no clear intention to deceive. In such cases William College may take developmental actions only. These actions are intended to support learning and improve academic skills and do not constitute formal penalties.

Permitted actions may include:

- Enhanced formative feedback within the marking process.
- Referral to academic skills or study support services.
- Mandatory completion of academic integrity or referencing support activities.
- A permitted resubmission opportunity where allowed under the Partner Universities' assessment regulations and requirements.

William College does not impose marks-based penalties, disciplinary sanctions, or academic misconduct outcomes in cases of poor academic practice.

William College may not impose penalties for poor academic practice beyond those permitted through normal assessment and feedback processes. No academic misconduct panel will be convened at this stage. If additional evidence arises that suggests the matter may constitute academic misconduct, the case will be escalated in accordance with Section 5.3.

5.3 Formal Investigation of Academic Misconduct

Responsibility: William College (referral); Partner Universities (investigation and decision)
Timescale: Referral normally made within five working days of the initial review decision.

Where the Module Leader concludes that the concern goes beyond poor academic practice and may constitute academic misconduct, William College will refer the case to Partner University in accordance with the University's Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure.

William College's role at this stage is limited to:

- Submitting the Alleged Academic Misconduct Form and supporting evidence.
- Notifying the student that the matter has been referred.
- Providing pastoral and academic support as appropriate.

William College does **not** conduct academic misconduct hearings, make findings of academic misconduct, or determine penalties. All investigations, decisions, and sanctions relating to academic misconduct are the sole responsibility of the Partner Universities. The relevant Partner University will notify the student and William College in writing of the outcome of the investigation.

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5.4 Decision-Making and Outcomes

Responsibility: Partner Universities (decision); William College (recording and implementation)

Where academic misconduct is upheld following referral under this policy, the relevant Partner University, as the awarding body, is solely responsible for determining any outcome or penalty in accordance with its Academic Misconduct Policy and associated regulations.

Outcomes determined by the Partner University may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following actions, depending on the nature, extent, and severity of the academic misconduct and as permitted under the applicable regulations:

- The issuing of a formal written warning.
- The application of a mark adjustment or academic penalty to the affected assessment or module.
- A requirement to undertake a reassessment or resubmission of the assessment, which may be capped or uncapped in accordance with regulations.
- Failure of the assessment or module.
- Restriction or removal of reassessment opportunities.
- Termination of registration or withdrawal of an award in cases of serious or sustained academic misconduct.

The Partner University will communicate the outcome of its investigation and any associated actions to the student and to William College in writing. William College will ensure that the outcome is accurately recorded and implemented in accordance with the Partner University's instructions but does not have the authority to determine, vary, amend, or overturn any decision or penalty.

Following the conclusion of an academic misconduct investigation, the relevant Partner University will communicate the outcome and any associated penalties to William College.

William College will ensure that the outcome is accurately recorded by Registry, Data and Compliance Team and implemented in accordance with university instructions.

William College will not vary, amend, or overturn any decision or penalty determined by the relevant Partner University. Outcomes will be reported to the appropriate assessment board for oversight and quality assurance purposes.

Where cases involve multiple students, including collusion, William College will support the relevant Partner University in ensuring consistency of approach while maintaining confidentiality and fairness.

5.5 Appeals

Students have the right to request a review of decisions or outcomes arising from the application of this Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy.

Appeals must be submitted in accordance with the academic appeals regulations of the relevant Partner University. Time limits for submitting an appeal are set out in the applicable procedures and must be observed.

Appeals may only be submitted on one or more of the following grounds:

- There was a material procedural irregularity in the handling of the case.
- The decision reached was not reasonable based on the evidence available at the time.
- New and relevant evidence has become available that could not reasonably have been provided earlier.
- There was actual bias or a reasonable perception of bias during the process.
- The outcome or penalty applied was not permitted under the relevant regulations or was disproportionate to the nature of the case.

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Appeals will be considered in line with the stages and requirements set out in the applicable complaints and appeals procedures of the Partner University. Students may be required to provide further information or clarification in support of their appeal.

Where an appeal is not upheld or is deemed inadmissible, the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter. This letter will set out the reasons for the decision and provide information on the next steps available to the student. Where an appeal is upheld, the Partner University will confirm the outcome in writing and outline any actions to be taken.

Where a case is referred back for reconsideration, the College and the relevant Partner University will seek to conclude the process as promptly as possible and, where practicable, within a reasonable timescale consistent with regulatory expectations.

All documentation relating to academic misconduct investigations, decisions, and appeals will be securely retained as part of the student's academic record in accordance with data protection requirements.

Appeals against academic misconduct outcomes on Partner awards are handled under the relevant Partner University appeals regulations; William College supports the student in accessing the correct route.

5.6 Further Review and External Adjudication

William College is a subscribing institution of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) and operates in accordance with OIA guidance, regulatory requirements, and its contractual arrangements with awarding Partner Universities.

For programmes leading to qualifications awarded by Partner Universities:

- All academic misconduct investigations, decisions, penalties, and appeals are conducted in accordance with the relevant Partner University's Academic Misconduct and Academic Appeals Regulations.
- The awarding Partner University is responsible for issuing the Completion of Procedures (COP) letter following the conclusion of the academic misconduct and/or appeals process.
- Eligibility to request an independent review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) arises only after the Partner University has issued its Completion of Procedures letter.

As William College does not investigate, determine, or adjudicate academic misconduct cases, there is no internal William College review stage for such matters beyond referral and procedural support.
William College may provide students with procedural guidance on accessing the appropriate Partner University appeal route and the OIA review process but does not act as a decision-making body at any stage of academic misconduct review or appeal.

Further information about the OIA and the external review process is available at: here

6. Training and Communication

William College recognises the importance of supporting students in understanding academic integrity. All students are required to participate in mandatory induction sessions that introduce key principles of academic integrity, including correct referencing practices and how to avoid plagiarism.

The College provides access to online tutorials and learning resources throughout the academic year to support ongoing development of academic skills.

Academic and professional staff receive regular training in the use of plagiarism detection tools and in the consistent handling of academic misconduct cases. Academic integrity principles are reinforced through ongoing communications to students and staff to ensure continued awareness and understanding.

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This policy is published on the College website and VLE.

7. Compliance and Monitoring:

- Annual Academic Misconduct Report to Academic Board with data and recommendations.
- Patterns trigger interventions (e.g., referencing workshops if plagiarism is high in first-year essays).
- Regular external benchmarking against sector practice.

8. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Academic Board, or sooner if required by regulatory, Partner, or legislative changes.

9. Related Policies and Documents

- Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.
- Statement on the use of AI.
- BSU Academic Integrity Policy and Academic Misconduct Procedure.
- BBK Academic Integrity and Misconduct (AIM) Policy and Procedure.
- Partner Universities' Appeals Policies.

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