Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policy

RSY-ACAD-PY-011-v1.2-Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policy
### Document History

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| 1.2     | Apr 2015       | 1 May 2015             | - Reformatted to RCDC Standard Policy template  
|          |                |                        | - Amend "Registrar" to "Student Services Director"  
|          |                |                        | - Updated and rearranged sequence of policy and procedure content.  
|          |                |                        | - Inclusion of the definition of procedural fairness under Section 3.  
|          |                |                        | - Inclusion of implications on international students holding student visa of the suspension or termination of enrolment under Section 8.  
|          |                |                        | - Inclusion of student's rights to external appeal under Section 9.  |

**Approved by:** Academic Board on 1 May 2015

**Distribution List**

To:  
RCDC Academic Staff  
All Student Services Staff  
Associate Colleges, College Directors

Cc:  
Chair, Council  
Chair, Senior Management Committee
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1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this document is to define the actions and behaviours that constitute academic misconduct and plagiarism at the College, and how they are to be addressed, including:

(a) responsibilities of the College, and the rights and responsibilities of staff and students with regard to the prevention and detection of academic misconduct and plagiarism;

(b) procedures to be applied consistently in the investigation and resolution of cases of alleged academic misconduct and plagiarism;

(c) advice to students on steps they should take to avoid committing academic misconduct and plagiarism.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled with Raffles College of Design and Commerce (RCDC), including those enrolled at offshore campuses.

3 Definition of Terms

3.1 Academic misconduct involves dishonesty in academic matters, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

a) cheating, acting dishonestly, or otherwise attempting to gain an unfair advantage in an examination or any other assessment;

b) submitting, as one's own, work that another person has completed;

c) collusion with or assisting someone else to gain an unfair advantage in an examination or any other assessment;

d) misrepresenting, fabricating or falsifying information or data;

e) using information in breach of a duty of confidentiality;

f) attributing work to others who have not contributed to the research;

g) interfering with any research-related data, property or material of another person, or assisting someone else to do so;

h) making improper use of copyright material;

i) failing to report academic misconduct of which the person is aware.

3.2 Plagiarism refers to the use of another person's work, thoughts and/or intellectual property without appropriate reference or acknowledgement of that source, and includes:

a) intentionally or unintentionally copying (in whole or in part) the work or data of other persons, or paraphrasing closely, substantial extracts from written, printed, electronic or other media, in written, oral, electronic, online or group assessment work, without due acknowledgment;

b) quoting or paraphrasing material from a source without appropriate acknowledgement;

c) omitting reference to the relevant published work of others for the purpose of claiming personal discovery of new information;
3.3 **Procedural fairness** refers to procedures that support natural justice, and includes ensuring that

- Students are informed, with adequate notice, of allegations and proceedings
- Students are provided with opportunity to respond and be heard
- Decision makers have no conflict of interest or prior involvement in the case
- Proceedings are carried out, and determinations made properly and without bias

4 **Policy Principles**

4.1 Ethical conduct and academic integrity and honesty are fundamental to the mission of the College.

4.2 The principles for assessing a case of alleged plagiarism or academic misconduct are as follows:

(a) each case will be treated on its merits;

(b) the extent of the plagiarism and the student’s history in regard to plagiarism and/or academic misconduct, will be principal criteria;

(c) the nature of the misconduct, the context and the student’s history in relation to academic misconduct and/or plagiarism will be principal criteria;

(d) investigations under this policy and advice to the student of the outcomes of the investigation will be dealt with in a timely manner. The response from the College at each stage should normally be within 10 working days. Students will be given 10 working days to respond to the allegations at each stage.

5 **Responsibilities**

5.1 **Responsibilities of the College**

The College has an obligation to:

(a) set in place and notify all academic staff and students of the policies and procedures relating to academic misconduct and plagiarism;

(b) inform all parties of their rights and responsibilities;

(c) ensure that the policies and procedures are implemented consistently;

(d) advise students on how to avoid committing academic misconduct and plagiarism;

(e) advise staff on how to minimise opportunities for academic misconduct and plagiarism by students, and how to detect instances of it;

(f) provide students with adequate opportunity to answer allegations of academic misconduct and plagiarism;

(g) provide an appropriate process for students to appeal against decisions arising from allegations of academic misconduct and plagiarism;

(h) maintain a central Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism file securely and allow appropriate access only to persons with a legitimate need for the data in order to discharge their duties and responsibilities
5.2 Responsibilities of College Academic Staff

All academic staff have a responsibility to:

(a) know the policy of the College on academic misconduct and plagiarism, and apply it consistently;
(b) explain to students, modelling good scholarly practice, the concept of academic misconduct and plagiarism, and play a central role in assisting the College to discharge the responsibilities listed above;
(c) ensure that adequate information is provided to students about referencing requirements and academic conventions for the use of others' work, as appropriate for the discipline;
(d) take all reasonable steps to ensure that information presented is reliable and up to date;
(e) inform students of obligations regarding acknowledgment of collaborative work, and give clear guidelines for group work;
(f) provide students with notification or fair warning if they believe any individual student or group of students may be at risk of breaching guidelines relating to academic misconduct and plagiarism;
(g) give clear feedback about referencing problems;
(h) refer students to sources of advice on academic writing;
(i) ensure that allegations of academic misconduct and plagiarism are based on probative evidence;
(k) check for plagiarism in student assessment submissions, using computer assisted and manual methods; and
(j) report cases in which there is evidence of academic misconduct and plagiarism to the Academic Director.

5.3 Responsibilities and Rights of Students

5.3.1 Students have a responsibility and obligation to:

(a) read, understand and comply with this policy;
(b) familiarise themselves with the conventions of referencing for the discipline;
(c) avoid acts which constitute plagiarism or academic misconduct;
(d) seek assistance from appropriate sources and support services if they become aware that they need more knowledge and skills;
(e) ensure that when they submit an assessment task manually or electronically, the assessment complies with this Policy;
(f) report academic misconduct or plagiarism of which they are aware.

5.3.2 Students should:

(a) be informed of the policies of the College with respect to academic misconduct and plagiarism;
(b) be provided with clear guidelines on academic writing styles required;
(c) receive practical comments which assist them to review their work and apply the principles in this Policy;
(d) expect clear guidelines relating to all aspects of group work and collaboration;
(e) expect notification or fair warning in the case where an academic staff member believes a student or group of students may be at risk of breaching guidelines relating to academic misconduct and plagiarism;
(f) participate in appropriate learning experiences designed to improve competency in writing and study skills, understanding of the requirements of group work and collaboration, and development of personal attributes, in particular, ethical behaviour;

(g) expect consistent interpretation of this policy.

5.3.3 Where an allegation of plagiarism or academic misconduct has been made, the student will be advised promptly in writing of relevant matters, including:

(a) the nature of the allegation;
(b) their right to present a case in writing or orally to the Academic Director;
(c) the student support available; and
(d) the fact that upon completion of the investigation by the Academic Director and/or Standing Panel in relation to the case, the student will receive a written statement as to the outcome of the investigation and the decision on the penalty.

6 Process for Handling Allegations of Student Plagiarism or Academic Misconduct

This process sets out the guideline for handling allegations of student misconduct in a manner that is consistent, clear, and in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness, and generally includes the following procedures:

6.1 Detection: If a member of staff or a fellow student has reason to suspect plagiarism or academic misconduct, that person must inform the Program Director at the earliest opportunity. The Program Director will investigate whether there is any probative evidence to support the suspicion.

6.2 Allegation: When plagiarism or academic misconduct is suspected, and there is some probative evidence to support the allegation, the Program Director must present a written report on the matter to the Academic Director detailing the evidence on which the allegation is based. If the allegation is one of plagiarism, the Program Director must also present a copy of the work with the alleged plagiarism identified, and any other evidence to be relied upon to support the claim of plagiarism.

6.3 Determination: Based on the evidence and materials available, the Program Director and the Academic Director will determine whether or not there is a prima facie case of plagiarism or academic misconduct.

6.4 Notification: If a prima facie case of plagiarism or academic misconduct is found to exist, the Academic Director will notify the student in writing, to be sent by recorded delivery wherever possible, of:

(a) the allegation;
(b) the student’s rights; and
(c) the student support available.

6.5 Accompanying Documents: The written advice to the student will be accompanied by:

(a) a copy of this policy;
(b) in the case of plagiarism, a copy of relevant portions of the work with the allegedly plagiarised material or item identified;
(c) in the case of academic misconduct, a report setting out the conduct in question and the supporting documentary or other evidence and materials; and
6.6 **Opportunity to Respond:** The student will be given an opportunity to respond, to the allegation and required to lodge a response within 10 working days of the date in the letter of notification. The response must set out in full the bases upon which the student disputes the allegation, and set out all evidence and other materials the student relies upon in support of his/her argument. The response must be sent to the Academic Director.

6.7 **Record of Investigation:** A record of the investigation will be kept and noted on the central Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism file maintained by the Student Services Director. Any written response from the student will form part of the record of the investigation. An accurate written record of the discussion must be made, and dated by the Academic Director.

6.8 **Support Person:** The student may invite a support person to any meeting. The support person may provide the student with advice. The College may, at its discretion, engage legal counsel to assist the Academic Director.

6.9 **Further Information:** The Academic Director may seek such further information or advice on the substance of the allegation, if deemed necessary, from academic staff other than the Program Director, or any other person or body. Such information or advice will be in or reduced to writing and sent to the student for a further response within 10 working days.

7 **Decision on Allegations of Student Plagiarism or Academic Misconduct**

7.1 When the student's response has been received, or when no response has been received after 10 working days, the Academic Director will decide:

(a) whether or not the evidence is sufficient to support a finding of plagiarism, academic misconduct, or both;

(b) in the case of plagiarism, whether the plagiarism was intentional or unintentional; and

(c) whether mitigating circumstances exist.

7.2 **Prior Instances:** Where the Academic Director determines that plagiarism, academic misconduct, or both occurred, the Academic Director will consult the central Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism file for prior instances of plagiarism or academic misconduct by the student before determining the course of action.

Existence of prior instance/s of a breach of this Policy may be cause for imposing a harsher penalty.

7.3 **Action by Academic Director:** As a consequence of the decisions made in 7.1, the Academic Director shall follow one of the following four possible courses of action:

(a) conclude that the allegation of plagiarism or academic misconduct, or both, is not supported and dismiss the allegation;

(b) conclude that unintentional plagiarism or academic misconduct, or both occurred, but that mitigating circumstances do exist, and apply a penalty chosen from those in [8.1] below;

(c) conclude that intentional plagiarism or academic misconduct, or both occurred, but that mitigating circumstances do not exist, or are not persuasive, and apply a penalty chosen from 8.2; or
conclude that intentional plagiarism or academic misconduct, or both, occurred, and is such as to merit a severe penalty as listed in 8.3, and refer the case to the Academic Board of RCDC.

7.4 Determination and Notification: As a consequence of any decision referred to in 9, the decision maker will advise all relevant parties. In the case where a penalty is applied, the student will be advised of the right to, and procedures for, appeal under 10.

7.5 Record Keeping: At each stage of the investigation, records should be kept of all relevant documentation, including:

(a) the piece of work in respect of which the alleged plagiarism or academic misconduct has occurred;
(b) records of meetings and/or telephone conversations with the student, which records should be made as soon as possible after the event, and should be signed and dated by the person making the record; and
(c) copies of correspondence, whether or not in electronic form.

7.6 Central Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism file: At the end of the matter, whatever decision is reached, records referred to in 7.7 and a record of the final decision will be deposited in the Central Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism file maintained by the Student Services Director of RCDC.

7.7 Annual Report: At the end of each academic year the Student Services Director will submit a report to the Academic Board listing by Department the number of investigations that were carried out, and whether the ultimate decision was made by the Academic Director, and the nature of the penalty.

7.8 The Student Services Director may recommend any changes to this Policy, or procedures involved, that they believe are necessary or appropriate to improve it, or its effectiveness or fairness. In any event, the Academic Director and Academic Board shall review the Policy every 12 months on receipt of the Student Services Director’s report, and recommend any necessary improvements or refinements to the Policy in light of the prior year’s experience or other circumstances.

8 Penalties for Plagiarism or Academic Misconduct

If a student is found to have engaged in academic misconduct, the College will normally apply a penalty depending on the nature of the misconduct.

8.1 Unintentional Plagiarism

If the Academic Director determines that unintentional plagiarism occurred, one or more of the following actions may be taken:

(a) give a warning or reprimand to the student;
(b) arrange counselling for the student to prevent further occurrences;
(c) reduce the mark for the assessment task by up to 50%;
(d) require the student to rewrite and resubmit the assessable task, for a maximum possible mark of 60%;
(e) require the student to undertake a comparable alternative assessment task, for a maximum possible mark of 60%.

8.2 Intentional Plagiarism
If the Academic Director determines that intentional plagiarism, academic misconduct, or both occurred, one or more of the following penalties may be taken:

(a) reduce the mark for the assessment task by at least 60%;
(b) require the student to rewrite and resubmit the assessment task, for a maximum possible mark of 50%;
(c) require the student to undertake a comparable alternative assessment task, for a maximum possible mark of 50%.
(d) reduce the grade for the subject;
(e) other penalty as deemed appropriate.

8.3 Serious or Repeat Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism

If the Academic Director determines that the student committed academic misconduct or plagiarism, and has also done so previously on one or more occasions, and that the case merits a severe penalty, the Academic Director will refer a recommendation to the Chair of the Academic Board, who may instruct the Student Services Director to impose one or more of the following penalties:

(a) any of the penalties described in 8.2;
(b) an award of the grade of W (withdrawal from the subject whereby the student will have to repeat the subject);
(c) an award of the grade of F (failed the subject, the student will have to repeat the subject);
(d) suspend the student for one or more terms;
(e) terminate the student’s enrolment.

8.3.1 International students

Where an international student is suspended, or enrolment terminated, due to academic misconduct or plagiarism, RCDC is required to inform the student in writing of its intention to suspend or cancel his/her enrolment and to advise that the suspension or termination of the student's enrolment may affect his/her student visa. The student shall be advised that he/she has 20 working days within which to lodge an appeal against the decision. If the student does not exercise the right to appeal, or appeal results in the original decision being upheld, RCDC shall proceed to inform the Department of Education and Training via Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS).

9 Appeals

9.1 A student who wishes to appeal against a decision made by the Academic Director may do so in writing, and the appeal may only be made on the grounds of procedural unfairness or if the student believes that he or she can present new grounds to appeal the penalty imposed. The appeal shall be referred to the Chair of Academic Board, who shall consider all information relevant to the case, including the appeal lodged by the student, and will decide that:

(a) new grounds do or do not exist, and
(b) in the event that new grounds exist, will determine that:
   (i) the allegation is not substantiated; or
   (ii) the decision of the Academic Director be upheld.

9.2 Standing Panel for investigation

The Chair of Academic Board may appoint a Standing Panel comprising the Student Services Director as the Chair, a Program Director, up to a maximum of two other academic staff, and an optional student representative, to consider any further appeals against the decisions and/or penalty made by the Academic Director under 9.1 above. The Standing Panel shall consider the facts and
prior decisions, and shall make a collective decision and recommendation to the Student Services Director of RCDC, for actions and notification to the students.

9.3 If the Standing Panel determines that the appeal should not proceed, and upholds the decision of the Academic Director, the student will be notified of the decision.

9.4 **External Appeal**

Notification of the final decision shall include notice of the right of any external appeal in accordance to the Student Grievance and Appeal Policy and Procedure.

9.5 If the student seeks to pursue the appeal to the external bodies, RCDC is required to maintain the enrolment of the student pending the finalisation of the appeal.