

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

PURPOSE

Quality outcomes from vocational education and training (VET) are fundamental to ensure graduates are compatible with employment and thus ensuring a skilled workforce. Academic integrity is an essential component of evidence-based learning and quality assessment outcomes, which are foundational to the very nature of VET.

Seed Skills firmly views that all academic misconduct is unacceptable, and the purpose of this policy is to uphold the standards of ethics and integrity expected of students, and to provide a systematic approach to the treatment of academic misconduct.

POLICY

Seed Skills will promote academic integrity by providing students with guidance and feedback to develop their knowledge and skills relating to academic integrity; as well as responding to allegations of academic misconduct. There is an expectation that students will prepare and submit work that is their own, and where appropriate, acknowledge the work of others.

Students are required to:

- undertake studies and research responsibly and with honesty and integrity;
- ensure that academic work is in no way falsified;
- seek permission to use the work of others, where required;
- acknowledge appropriately the work of others; and
- take reasonable steps to ensure that other students are unable to copy or misuse their work.

A student can only be deemed competent when they have been assessed as demonstrating the skills and knowledge requirements against all the unit of competency requirements. Where a student fails to provide authentic evidence in line with the rules of evidence requirements under clause 1.8 of the Standards for RTO's 2015, the student will be penalised in line with this policy and will not be deemed competent in the respective unit of competency until investigations into all allegations of misconduct have been completed in line with this policy and any affected assessment tasks have been resubmitted.

DEFINITIONS

Academic Integrity – Involves upholding ethical standards in all aspects of academic work, including learning, teaching and research. It involves acting with the principles of honesty, fairness, trust, and responsibility and requires respect for knowledge and its development.

Academic Misconduct – any action(s) or behaviour likely to result in an unfair academic advantage, whether by unfairly advantaging a student or disadvantaging another.

Assessment task – Includes any work submitted for assessment including an examination, assignment or other task.

Cheating – An intention to gain an unfair advantage in the assessment of a unit of competency by acting fraudulently, dishonestly and/or deceitfully.

Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to:

- tampering with assessment documentation, systems or materials;
- submitting falsified, copied or improperly obtained information as part of an assessment;
- sharing or publishing completed assessment tasks;
- submitting an assessment task written or answered for the student by another person or which the student has copied from another person;
- submitting the same or a substantially similar piece of work for assessment in two different courses or units of competency (except in accordance with approved study and assessment schemes); and
- a student falsely indicating that they have been present at an activity where attendance is required

Plagiarism – Plagiarism, whether inadvertent or deliberate, refers to the presentation of work, ideas or data of others as one's own, without appropriate acknowledgment and referencing. Plagiarism also includes self-plagiarism.

PROCEDURE

Identification

A concern about academic misconduct may be identified by other students, a Trainer and Assessor, the RTO Compliance Manager or RTO Manager and referred to the appropriate Trainer and Assessor for investigation. Where misconduct is suspected or identified, it must be investigated by the student's Trainer and Assessor.

If the identified instance is not the first case of academic misconduct against a student, the matter must be investigated in consultation with the RTO Compliance Manager.

Investigation

During investigation, it is important to determine whether misconduct has occurred. Where it has, there are five factors which need to be considered when determining the seriousness of the act:

1. the type of misconduct
2. the extent of the misconduct
3. the experience of the student

4. the intent of the student
5. the impact of the misconduct

Where it is suspected that academic misconduct has occurred, the Trainer and Assessor should employ reasonable means to investigate the claim including, but not limited to, web search engines, comparison with other assignments and confidential consultation with colleagues.

Record

Documentary evidence must be gathered to substantiate the claim including, but not limited to, Records of Conversations, emails, the assessment task/s under investigation and the original source/s (wherever possible).

All files relating to cases of alleged academic misconduct, including the outcomes of investigations and decisions made, should be considered confidential and must be stored in the Student Management System (JobReady).

Adjudicate

The Trainer and Assessor, upon completion of investigation, will make a decision as to whether academic misconduct has occurred. Where serious misconduct has occurred, the Trainer and Assessor may discuss the matter with the RTO Compliance Manager or the RTO Manager for the purposes of making an appropriate decision.

Penalise

Any decision about the consequences of academic misconduct is to:

1. ensure that any penalty is fair, just and considers all of the circumstances;
2. maintain RTO compliance with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations; and
3. maintain the integrity of vocational education and training

Warnings and outcomes must be communicated in writing to the student and recorded by the Trainer and Assessor in the Student Management System (JobReady).

Minor Academic Misconduct

Where the investigation concludes that the misconduct was the result of a genuine misunderstanding of this policy, the student will receive a written warning that future breaches will not be treated as a genuine misunderstanding.

Where the investigation concludes that there was no genuine misunderstanding of the requirements of this policy, the student will be sent written correspondence by the Trainer and Assessor with an invitation to respond within 5 business days, to the allegation of a minor incident. Any response from the student will then be taken into account by the Trainer and Assessor.

Where the Trainer and Assessor decides to uphold the incident, a formal written warning will be sent to the student and, where the student is enrolled through service arrangements, a notification will be sent to their employer (supervisor/manager).

In both cases, the student will be required to re-submit the assessment task/s.

Significant Academic Misconduct or Second Breach of Policy.

Where the act of misconduct, through investigation, is determined to be deliberate and serious in nature, or it is the second act of misconduct from a student, the student will be sent written correspondence by the Trainer and Assessor detailing the evidence collected during investigation. This correspondence will also include an invitation to respond to the allegation within 5 business days. Any response from the student will then be taken into account by the Trainer and Assessor.

Where the Trainer and Assessor decides to uphold the incident, a formal written warning will be sent to the student and, where the student is enrolled through service arrangements, a notification will be sent to their employer (supervisor/manager). This may also result in a result of Not Yet Competent against the unit of competency or a suspension of enrolment.

The student will be required to attend a formal meeting with the Trainer and Assessor to discuss the findings of the investigation and the penalties imposed. The Trainer and Assessor will document this conversation (*Records of Conversations Form*) and record in the Student Management System (JobReady).

The student will be required to re-submit the assessment task/s unless a penalty of a result of Not Yet Competent against the unit of competency is imposed. In this instance, the student will be required to re-enrol in this unit.

Third and Final Breach of Policy.

Where the student breaches this policy for a third time, the Trainer and Assessor must escalate the case to the RTO Manager for formal review. A third breach may result in a penalty of suspension or termination of enrolment from all qualifications of study.

The student will be sent written correspondence from the RTO Manager detailing the determination and outcome. Where the student is enrolled through service arrangements, a formal notification will be sent to their employer (supervisor/manager).

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS

All documentation relating to student academic misconduct is kept confidential and only disclosed to those persons who have a role in the implementation of this process.

Procedural fairness involves:

- the student's right to know the details of any allegation against them;
- the opportunity to present their case;
- the right to be treated without bias;
- a decision made on an objective and unbiased assessment of the evidence.

To ensure the decision of the trainer and assessor is objective and free from bias, each separate concern about a breach of academic integrity is investigated as an individual event. When in the investigation of an alleged breach there is discovery of further, separate breaches, each such breach will be investigated and managed separately and independently.

APPEAL

If a student is accused of and penalised for academic misconduct and believe that the accusation is unjust, they have the right to appeal against the charge. This appeal must be lodged in accordance with Seed Skill's Grievance, Complaints and Appeals Policy.

The appeal may be lodged against:

- the process
- the decision
- the penalty.

Refer to the Grievance, Complaints and Appeals Policy for more information on appealing an academic decision.