

Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy



A4

GC Academy Limited

Authentic work fair investigation and independent appeal

Revision date 9 September 2026

Institutional approval pending

This policy defines academic integrity, explains how suspected misconduct is reviewed and protects the student's opportunity to respond and appeal. Tutors identify concerns, an independent Academic Integrity Panel decides cases, and the Head of Institution ensures that authorised outcomes are implemented. The policy includes records for referral, decision and follow-up.

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Responsibility and approval

The Head of Institution owns this policy. The Head of Quality Assurance Office coordinates case administration, publication and review. The QA and Curriculum Committee reviews proposed changes and Academic Board approves the academic procedure under A16 and A17.

Revision date: 9 September 2026. Review: annually and following a material change in assessment, technology, institutional arrangements or applicable requirements. The approval record establishes the effective date; the revision date alone does not establish approval.

Approval reference and date: _____

Effective date and next review: _____

Scope and related documents

The procedure applies to suspected student misconduct in assessments and scholarly work across GC Academy programmes, including online examinations, assignments, case studies, practical projects, presentations and the Final Project. Staff and partner educators apply the same requirements when acting for the Academy. Staff misconduct and wider ethical concerns follow A23 and the applicable staff or complaints procedure; student penalties are not employment sanctions.

Read this policy with A1 Academic Appeals Procedure, A3 Academic Integrity Acknowledgement, A16, A17, A18 Programme Design, Monitoring and Assessment Policy, A23 Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, A25 Student Records Management Policy, the existing AI and Generative AI Guidance for Staff and Students, and the approved programme brief and rubrics.

Before the first assessment is issued, the Head of Institution confirms approval and alignment of these procedures, available independent decision-makers, staff preparation, secure case records and working contact routes. The annexes are blank records for use when an actual concern arises.

Academic integrity and prohibited conduct

1 Introduction

GC Academy upholds academic integrity in its programmes and activities. Assessments and scholarly work must reflect the student's own effort, understanding and achievement. This policy combines clear expectations and educational support with a fair, documented process for suspected breaches.

2 Definition of academic integrity

Academic integrity means producing original work, accurately acknowledging sources, respecting intellectual property and acting honestly in assessments and academic interactions. Students identify their own contribution and the help they receive. Approved group work requires attributable individual evidence; a shared product or peer rating alone does not establish each person's achievement.

3 Types of academic misconduct

- Plagiarism: presenting another person's words, ideas or work without appropriate acknowledgement, including copying or inadequately attributed paraphrase.
- Collusion: unauthorised collaboration or misrepresenting another person's contribution as individual work. Collaboration expressly required by the approved brief is permitted.
- Contract cheating: submitting work produced by another person or service as the student's own, whether paid for or obtained otherwise.
- Fabrication or falsification: inventing or altering data, sources, quotations, references or other academic evidence and presenting it as genuine.
- Impersonation: another person submitting work, taking an examination or attending an assessment on the student's behalf, or the student acting for someone else.
- Unauthorised tools or assistance: using prohibited resources, communication, third-party help or AI contrary to the assessment instructions.

AI use and disclosure

AI use is not automatically plagiarism or misconduct. The existing AI and Generative AI Guidance governs permitted, restricted and prohibited uses. The approved brief states the applicable level and declaration requirements before work begins. Tutors apply that approved design and do not change permissions independently after release.

Where AI assistance is permitted and declaration is required, identify the tool, purpose, extent and affected work; verify content and sources and accept responsibility for the submission. Use the applicable declaration in the assessment rubric or guidance. A declaration does not make prohibited use acceptable. Concealment where disclosure is required, fabricated evidence or substitution for the student's assessed competence can warrant referral.

Staff retain human responsibility for teaching, marking and feedback. Personal, confidential or assessment data is not entered into external AI tools without the required authorisation. Students can seek clarification about permitted assistance before using it; unclear instructions are considered when reviewing a concern.

Detection and reporting

4 Screening and academic review

Submitted assessments undergo academic review and the applicable integrity checks. Written submissions are screened using institutionally authorised plagiarism tools; other formats use suitable source, authorship and performance evidence. Any technical or administrative screening before release to the educator is an initial check. Academic judgement remains with the tutor or assessor.

A similarity percentage, AI score, proctoring alert or other automated flag is an indicator for human review. It does not establish misconduct, authorise a grade reduction or automatically fail a student. Equally, the absence of an alert does not prove originality. Staff consider the tool's limitations and the actual work, rather than relying on a product label or detection threshold.

The tutor or assessor checks the brief and permitted resources, the relevant passages or outputs, source matches, citations and declarations. Relevant drafts, prior work, LMS information and the student's explanation can provide context. A change of style or low LMS activity alone does not establish a breach. Preserve the report, its settings and date where available, the source evidence and the reviewer's reasons.

For online examinations, presentations and defences, retain the applicable identity instructions, observed conduct, relevant questions and individual answers, authorised recording or written observation, and any technical incident. Network failure, camera interruption, an approved adjustment or difficulty answering a question is not automatically misconduct. Authorship clarification is distinct from an unannounced additional graded assessment.

Registration notice and referral

A tutor, assessor or authorised staff member sends a documented concern through the secure institutional reporting route to the Head of Quality Assurance Office. Other reports are routed for appropriate academic review. The referral identifies the student, module, assessment and attempt, published rule, specific concern and evidence. Use Annex 1 and linked attachments; preserve the submitted version and existing assessment record.

QA registers the concern, checks completeness, admissibility and conflicts, identifies the appropriate route and records a timetable. QA checks procedural readiness and does not decide responsibility. If information is missing, request clarification. If academic review resolves the concern without formal referral, record the explanation and reason for closure without a misconduct finding or sanction.

Where a concern remains, QA sends the student the allegation, relevant evidence, applicable rules, potential consequences and response instructions in writing. Allow a reasonable period to respond, provide evidence and request a meeting, taking account of access and support needs. The notice states actual response and expected decision dates. An extension or delay is recorded and explained with revised dates.

The student's response, or the record of notice and non-response, accompanies the academic review in any formal referral to the Academic Integrity Panel. The tutor may explain the concern but does not decide the case. A student can challenge an apparent conflict through QA or the alternative A23 route. Good-faith reporting and participation are protected from retaliation.

Investigation and reasoned decisions

5 Independent Academic Integrity Panel

Unconflicted Academic Board members appoint three suitably qualified, independent academic voters for the case, including a senior academic chair. No voter has taught or assessed the work, made the referral, advised on its merits or otherwise participated in a way that compromises impartiality. Use independent external academics where internal separation or expertise is insufficient.

Record the appointment, competence, independence and declarations before consideration. A member declares any later conflict and is replaced before further deliberation. The Head of Quality Assurance Office acts as a non-voting procedural adviser and record keeper. QA does not determine the finding or sanction.

If the Head of Institution or QA lead is involved, unconflicted Board of Directors members arrange a substitute for oversight or administration. Allegations against a senior office-holder follow the independent arrangements in A23. The person concerned cannot select or direct their investigator or reviewer; a substitute cannot direct the student Panel's finding.

Evidence and opportunity to respond

The Panel considers the referral, published requirements, submitted work, contextual evidence and the student's response. QA confirms that the student has received the material relied upon and a fair opportunity to answer it. Protect unrelated third-party information while disclosing enough detail to answer the allegation. New material affecting the finding is shared for response before the decision.

The student can submit a written response, relevant evidence and request a meeting, including a secure online meeting. QA communicates the participants, purpose and arrangements and records any agreed accessibility or support provision. The chair allows the student to explain the work and answer the specific concern; questions remain relevant and impartial.

Keep a written meeting record, including material questions, answers and clarifications. Recording requires the applicable privacy arrangements. If the student does not respond or attend, first check notification, access and any explanation or request for more time. The Panel records whether it can fairly proceed on the available evidence. Silence is not an admission.

Collective decision and notification

All three voters participate and decide by majority. The record addresses each allegation, the rule in force, evidence accepted or rejected, the student's explanation and reasons for the finding. The Academy must substantiate the alleged breach. An allegation is upheld only where the considered evidence supports it; unresolved uncertainty is recorded. Prior allegations or detector scores do not substitute for evidence of the current breach.

If misconduct is established, the Panel selects and explains a proportionate sanction within section 6. If it is not established, the outcome records that conclusion and the work returns to the normal assessment process. Academic support can still be offered without labelling the student as responsible for misconduct.

The chair ensures a written decision reaches the student with reasons, any sanction, its assessment or status consequences, implementation dates and the direct appeal route and deadline. QA retains the notification and decision record. The Head of Institution ensures implementation and procedural oversight, without replacing the Panel's judgement.

Penalties and implementation

6 Authorised penalties

Only the Academic Integrity Panel, or the independent Appeals Panel acting within its powers, determines a misconduct sanction. The following categories are retained from the existing A4 policy. There is no automatic penalty based on a detector result, and a first concern does not automatically establish a first offence.

- Written warning and academic counselling for a minor or first substantiated offence. Academic counselling means guidance on academic practice, such as attribution or permitted assistance.
- Grade reduction or a requirement to resubmit work, with the precise assessment consequence, reasons and conditions stated in the decision.
- Failure in the module or removal from the programme for repeated or serious substantiated violations, with reasons explaining why that outcome is proportionate.

Proportionality and consistency

The Panel considers the nature and extent of the breach, its effect on authentic assessment, any deliberate deception, relevant instructions and preparation, the student's explanation and mitigating circumstances. Relevant previous confirmed findings can inform sanctioning; unresolved allegations cannot be treated as previous offences.

The decision identifies the particular sanction, affected work or module, any grade before and after the authorised change, and the required follow-up. Explain any combination of educational and assessment consequences. No fixed percentage deduction, automatic zero, new mark cap or blanket penalty scale is introduced by this policy. Similar cases are treated consistently, with reasons for material differences.

Each student's responsibility in a group task is considered individually. A finding against one participant does not automatically establish a breach by everyone else. Any effect on the assessment of other students follows the appropriate academic process and retains their opportunity for review.

Assessment attempts and execution

For the BA in Media and Communication, the programme application and A18 provide three total formal opportunities per assessment: the initial attempt and up to two resits or resubmissions. Formative practice does not count. A requirement to resubmit under this policy does not create an extra attempt, reset the count on return to study or authorise an unapproved exception. State the applicable attempt position and authorised conditions in the outcome.

The BA requires at least 51% in each assessment component. Normal marking, moderation and validation retain their evidence separately from the misconduct decision. The Board of Examiners applies authorised outcomes when validating results; it does not substitute its own misconduct finding. Administration records the approved result or status change and preserves the earlier value, authority, reason and date under A25.

The Head of Institution coordinates implementation through the relevant unconflicted officers. The written outcome states when a sanction applies and any authorised interim arrangements while an appeal is considered. A pending concern does not itself authorise removal, loss of credit or an additional assessment restriction. Any necessary temporary measure has a separate reason, authority and review date and does not prejudice responsibility.

Independent academic appeals

7 Direct access to appeal

The student can appeal within ten working days of notification of the Academic Integrity Panel's decision. Submit the case reference, disputed decision, grounds, supporting evidence and remedy sought through the formal academic-appeal channel published in the LMS and student guidance. Academic-misconduct appeals go directly to the independent Appeals Panel under A1; no informal return to the referring tutor is required.

QA or an unconflicted procedural administrator records receipt, the notification and submission dates, the appeal deadline and the expected outcome date, and confirms the route to the student. If the LMS cannot be accessed, use the published alternative institutional contact. Difficulties with access, timing or relevant mitigating circumstances are recorded and referred through A1 for consideration, rather than decided by the original assessor.

Grounds and independent membership

- Material procedural irregularity, including inadequate opportunity to respond or consideration of relevant mitigating circumstances.
- Bias or conflict of interest affecting the review or decision.
- Relevant new evidence that could not reasonably have been provided earlier.
- A finding not reasonably supported by the evidence.
- A materially disproportionate sanction.

Unconflicted Academic Board members appoint three independent voters, including a senior academic chair and sufficient academic expertise. No original assessor, referrer, first-instance Panel member or person involved in the original decision or its implementation decides the appeal. Use external members where necessary. Procedural support is independent of advice on the merits at first instance, and a conflicted administrator is replaced.

Student representation is included only where appropriate, competent and compatible with confidentiality and independence. The absence of a student representative does not prevent the appeal. All three voters participate and decide by majority.

Review outcome and remedy

The Appeals Panel reviews the original record, stated grounds and admitted new evidence, obtaining clarification where needed and allowing a response to material new information. It can uphold the decision, vary the sanction within this policy, set it aside or remit the case to a differently constituted Panel. Appropriate academic remedies follow A1 and the applicable assessment requirements.

The written outcome gives the decision, reasons and required action within fifteen working days of receipt of the formal appeal. Any exceptional delay is explained with a revised expected date. The Head of Institution arranges implementation by unconflicted officers. The original decision-maker cannot veto the outcome; assessment and student records retain the appeal and authorised correction.

A complaint about services follows A2 and does not remove the student's academic appeal rights. Separate complaints or ethical matters are coordinated under A23 without merging their decision-making powers. Students receive the available route and relevant contacts with the decision.

Prevention education and records

8 Preparation and student information

Academic ethics, writing and citation guidance form part of orientation and module preparation. Tutors explain authentic authorship, permitted collaboration, sources, task-specific AI conditions and declarations before assessed work begins. Practical examples help students distinguish appropriate support from substitution for their own understanding.

Before relevant duties, staff and partner educators receive preparation under A7 and A21 on interpreting similarity and AI reports, source verification, digital and oral evidence, student response rights, conflicts, proportionate decisions and independent appeal. QA distinguishes technical screening from academic review and formal adjudication. Record actual preparation and address gaps; a policy statement does not record completed training.

The Academy publishes the current approved A4 and related guidance through direct website access and provides them in the LMS and student information before assessment. From first enrolment, students acknowledge the applicable policy through the learning-agreement and A3 arrangements and the relevant induction stage. Staff acknowledge it at appointment and induction. Retain the version, person, date and any missing-completion follow-up; acknowledgement does not waive response or appeal rights.

Confidential records and contacts

QA maintains a secure case record linking the concern, brief and work, reports, review, declarations, appointments, notice, response, meeting, evidence, decision, sanction, notification, appeal and implementation. Annexes 1 and 2 provide the minimum structure and can be expanded electronically. Student records follow A25; access is limited to authorised participants and retention follows the applicable institutional schedule.

Reports use the secure LMS or the reporting contact retained in A23, reporting@globalconnect.academy, with QA coordinating the procedure. The Head of Institution confirms monitoring, confidentiality, cover and alternative contacts before publication. A concern involving QA can be raised with the Head of Institution; one involving the Head or another senior office-holder goes to unconflicted Board members through the published direct route.

Monitoring and improvement

The QA and Curriculum Committee and Academic Board review anonymised information on case handling, sanctions, timelines, appeals, recurring integrity issues and the clarity of assessment instructions through the Annual QA Calendar. Systemic review does not reopen an individual decision outside its appeal route. The Quality Enhancement Log records the finding, action, owner, due date and evidence of completion and effect.

Review this policy and the existing AI guidance annually and when significant technological, educational or institutional developments require change. Maintain current operational guidance on tools without making detection capability the basis of the policy. Communicate approved changes through document control, student guidance and staff preparation.

Before assessment begins, confirm the aligned A1/A4/A16/A17/A23 procedure and case templates. Record approvals, publication and preparation when they occur. Genuine student cases arise only after the relevant activity takes place; blank templates or practice cases are not evidence of actual implementation.

Annex 1 Referral and response record

Confidential. Complete for an actual concern and link supporting files securely. Expand fields or add numbered continuation pages as needed. Record facts and explanations without assuming misconduct. Use the same case reference throughout.

Case reference: _____

Student name and identifier: _____

Programme, module, assessment and attempt: _____

Submission date and submitted version: _____

Referrer role and date received by QA: _____

Concern and preliminary review

Brief and policy versions and rule concerned: _____

Specific allegation and affected work: _____

Academic review and student explanation references: _____

Evidence register: identify each item, its source and date, and the specific point it supports. Record access given to the student and any reason for restricted third-party detail.

Item and file reference	Source and date	Relevance and student access

Procedural checks and student response

QA administrator conflicts checked and substitute if needed: _____

Admissibility route and reasons to proceed or close: _____

Written notice evidence provided and date: _____

Response and decision dates and any extension: _____

Student response meeting request and agreed support: _____

Formal referral or closure date reason and record location: _____

QA confirmation and date: _____

This record does not determine responsibility or impose a sanction. A formal decision follows section 5 and Annex 2; retain the student's complete response and evidence with the referral.

Annex 2 Decision appeal and follow up

Confidential. Case reference: _____

Use linked, signed or otherwise authenticated decision records and continuation pages. Record a reasoned finding for each allegation; do not substitute ticks or a score for the reasoning.

Panel and decision record

Appointing authority date and appointment reference: _____

Three voters including chair and independence declarations: _____

Non voting administrator meeting date and all voters present: _____

Notice response access and meeting record references: _____

Allegations, rules, evidence and reasons: _____

Findings majority decision and authenticated record: _____

Sanction, proportionality and mitigating factors: _____

Affected result attempt or status and implementation date: _____

Written notification date appeal deadline and contact route: _____

Appeal record where applicable

Receipt date grounds new evidence and remedy requested: _____

Three independent voters chair appointment and declarations: _____

Review evidence response majority outcome and reasons: _____

Outcome due date notification date and explained delay: _____

Confirmed varied set aside or remitted decision and action: _____

Implementation and closure

Responsible unconflicted officer action and completion date: _____

BoE validation and prior and revised result: _____

Student notification secure record link and retention category: _____

QA verification closure date and anonymised review action: _____

Preserve the original assessment and case history, the complete written reasons, student communications and any appeal. An authorised change records who acted, on what authority and when. An unused form is not evidence of a completed case.