Plagiarism, Collusion and Cheating Policy and Procedure

1. Background

Austra College (hereinafter known as the "Institute") acknowledges the fundamental basis of training and assessment and that the assessment of fair and accurate competency relies on the ability of the assessors to assess the capabilities of individual students. Accordingly, certain expectations have been uniformly adopted to ensure that students are accurately assessed on their abilities rather than their willingness to circumvent rules or exploit the trust of their assessors.

2. Purpose

This policy ensures Austra College upholds the integrity and fairness of assessment by clearly defining and addressing acts of plagiarism, collusion, and cheating. It outlines detection and disciplinary processes, supports a culture of academic honesty, and safeguards the credibility of qualifications issued.

3. Scope / Audience

This policy applies to:

- All students enrolled in any course at Austra College (international or domestic);
- Academic and training staff involved in course delivery and assessment;
- Administrative staff supporting assessment processing;
- Third-party providers delivering training and assessment on behalf of Austra College.

4. Definitions

Term	Explanation	Examples
Plagiarism	The act of using someone else's work, ideas, data, or expressions as one's own, without proper acknowledgement. This includes both intentional and unintentional acts. Plagiarism undermines academic integrity by misrepresenting the origin of intellectual content.	- Copying sentences or paragraphs from books, articles, websites, or other students' work without quotation marks or citation. - Paraphrasing material from any source without acknowledging the original author. - Submitting another person's work, including friends, tutors, or online sources.

Term	Explanation	Examples
		- Reusing one's own previously submitted work (self-plagiarism) without approval or referencing. - Submitting AI-generated or purchased content as personal academic work.
Collusion	An agreement between two or more individuals to produce work together that is meant to be submitted individually. Even if only one party benefits, all involved are considered to have committed collusion.	- Submitting jointly written content as individual work without permission. - Allowing another student to copy one's assignment or sharing answers. - Editing another student's work to a degree that it becomes a shared effort. - Collaborating on tasks designated for individual assessment. - Offering to do or paying someone to edit or complete work for others.
Cheating	Any dishonest act intended to gain an unfair academic advantage during assessments or exams. Cheating breaches both ethical and academic standards and may occur during face-to-face or online assessments.	- Bringing unauthorised materials (e.g., cheat sheets, phones) into exam rooms. - Using or accessing internet resources or messaging during an online test. - Copying from another student during an assessment. - Submitting another student's assignment as one's own. - Using previously marked student submissions without acknowledgment.
Contract Cheating	A specific form of cheating where a student pays or engages another person or third-party service (e.g., website, friend, ghostwriter) to complete academic work on their behalf.	- Paying a website or tutor to write an essay or assignment. - Downloading a pre-written assessment from an online platform. - Using AI-based writing tools to complete assignments and submitting them without disclosure. - Arranging for another student to complete and submit a test.
Academic Misconduct	A broader term that encompasses all behaviours breaching academic standards, including plagiarism, collusion, cheating, contract cheating, falsifying documents, and misrepresenting information. These actions compromise the credibility of assessment and qualifications issued by Austra College.	- Any act listed under the above definitions. - Falsifying attendance or academic records. - Providing fraudulent medical certificates or documents to gain assessment extensions. - Repeated breaches despite formal warnings. - - Intentionally misleading staff during academic investigations.

5. Detection of Plagiarism, Collusion, and Cheating

Austra College is committed to ensuring the integrity of student assessment. The detection of academic misconduct will be proactive, consistent, and based on trainer judgement, document analysis, and procedural safeguards.

5.1 Staff Responsibilities

All trainers and assessors must:

- Educate students about what constitutes plagiarism, collusion, and cheating during orientation and assessment briefings.
- Explain the rules for individual vs group submissions clearly in each unit.
- Monitor student progress and flag inconsistencies or irregularities.
- Refer all suspected misconduct to the **Course Coordinator/Compliance Officer/SOO** for investigation and action under this policy.

5.2 Detection Mechanisms

Austra College will use the following multi-layered strategies:

A. Assessment Validation Checklists

- Assessors will perform different checking strategies. This includes checking for:
    - Inconsistencies in writing style.
    - Use of highly technical language not consistent with the student's previous work.
    - Missing or inconsistent citations.
    - Formatting that indicates copy-paste from external sources.

B. Oral Validation Interviews

- Where authenticity is in doubt, trainers may conduct brief oral interviews (5–10 minutes) where the student is asked to explain:
    - Key concepts in their written work.
    - How they completed the task.
    - Reasoning or decisions behind the content submitted.

This process helps determine whether the student truly understands and authored the work submitted.

C. Cross-Submission Comparison

- Trainers compare current submissions to:
    - Previous student work from the same unit.
    - Other current submissions from the same class to identify similar or identical content.

o   Trainer marking guides to check if content has been copied from model answers.

D. Trainer Intuition and Reporting

- If a trainer believes a student has submitted work inconsistent with their known academic ability, they can:
  - o   Flag the submission.
  - o   Request an academic validation session or interview.
  - o   Submit the case for formal review by the Compliance Manager/Course Coordinator.

E. Random Audit of Assessments

- The Compliance Manager/Course Coordinator may select assessments at random for review, particularly in high-risk units (e.g., where pass rates are abnormally high or low).
- This helps detect systematic cheating, collusion, or unauthorised group work.

5.3 Authentication Declaration

- All written assessment submissions must include a **signed Student Declaration** confirming the work is their own.
- This form reinforces personal responsibility and is retained in the student file.

6. Student Education and Prevention Measures

- Clear communication of academic integrity expectations via Student Handbook, orientation sessions, and course materials.
- Training sessions on referencing (e.g., Harvard system), use of source materials, and what constitutes plagiarism.
- Provision of academic writing resources and support services through the Student Support Officer.

7. Procedure for Managing Allegations

7.1 Initial Review

- The assessor identifies the potential breach and gathers supporting evidence.
- The Compliance Manager or Course Coordinator is notified and an investigation is initiated.

7.2 Formal Notification

- Student receives written notice of the allegation, including:
  - o   Description of suspected breach.
  - o   Evidence being considered.
  - o   Invitation to a formal meeting within 5 working days.

7.3 Student Meeting

- The student may bring a support person.
- Student can provide a written or verbal response.
- A record of the meeting will be documented.

7.4 Outcome Determination

- If the breach is substantiated, consequences are applied based on severity (see below).
- The outcome and rationale are communicated to the student in writing within 5 working days.

7.5 Right to Appeal

- The student may appeal the decision using the Complaints and Appeals Policy within 10 working days.

8. Level of Plagiarism, Collusion and cheating & Disciplinary action

Austra College classifies academic misconduct into three levels based on severity: **Minor**, **Moderate**, and **Major**. An **Informal Notice** may be issued prior to formal action if a trainer believes the student acted unintentionally or due to lack of understanding.

8.1 Informal Notice (Pre-Level 1)

Purpose: To educate and guide students who may have breached academic integrity unintentionally or through misunderstanding (e.g., new students unfamiliar with referencing).

Action	Responsibility	Details
Identify issue	Trainer	Identifies minor academic concern (e.g., poor referencing, suspected copy-paste with no clear intent).
Notify student informally	Trainer	Gives verbal feedback during or after assessment, explains the issue, and how to avoid it in the future.
Support offered	Trainer / Admin	Refers student to referencing guide, academic writing support, or Student Support Officer.
No formal penalty	-	Student may be allowed to resubmit or fix the issue without penalty. Record of informal discussion is kept in student file (optional).

8.2 Level 1 – Minor Misconduct

Definition: Offence with limited academic impact, often due to a lack of understanding (e.g., incorrect referencing, minor copying).

Roles	Actions and Responsibilities
Trainer	- Identify the misconduct - Complete a Misconduct Report Form - Discuss the issue with the student - Provide guidance and explain academic integrity rules
Admin Officer	- File the Misconduct Report Form in the student record - Issue a 1st warning of Student Misconduct to the student - Support trainer in resolution if needed
Student Consequences	- Written warning - The assessment attempt will be marked as Not Satisfactory (NS). If the student has subsequence attempt remaining, the student can resubmit the assessment - Referred to academic support or referencing session

8.3 Level 2 – Moderate Misconduct

Definition: Deliberate attempt to gain advantage (e.g., copying a peer's work, unauthorised group work), or a repeated Level 1 offence.

Roles	Actions and Responsibilities
Trainer	- Escalate issue to Course Coordinator/Compliance Manager - Collect and submit evidence (e.g., previous warnings, assessment copies) - Participate in the formal meeting with the student
Course Coordinator/ Compliance Manager	- Conduct meeting with student - Review student history - Determine if Level 2 classification is appropriate - Recommend outcome to Admin
Admin Officer	- Issue a **2nd warning on Student Misconduct** - Record incident in the student misconduct register
Student Consequences	- Not Satisfactory (NS) result for the assessment Task that has been identified. - Mandatory academic integrity training - Reassessment fees required to resubmit the assessment task

8.4 Level 3 – Serious/Major Misconduct

Definition: Serious and/or intentional breach (e.g., contract cheating, impersonation, falsification of documents), or repeated Level 2 offence.

Roles	Actions and Responsibilities
Trainer	- Immediately refer the matter to the Academic Manager - Submit all supporting documentation (assessment, emails, declarations, past offences)

Roles	Actions and Responsibilities
Compliance Manager/ Course Cordinator	- Conduct or delegate an academic misconduct hearing - Provide the student an opportunity to respond - Make a decision on disciplinary action
Admin Officer	- Issue Final warning of Student misconduct with intention to cancle COE - Notify DHA via PRISMS if CoE affected (for international students)
Student Consequences	- Not Yet Competent (NYC) result for the Unit of competency - Redo unit required (if approved) - Cancellation of CoE (if applicable) - Potential DHA reporting

Summary of Academic Misconduct Levels and Actions

Level	Description	Trainer Actions	Admin Actions	Student Consequences
Informal Notice	Unintentional or first-time issue related to referencing or academic practice	- Provide verbal guidance - Discuss academic integrity expectations - Offer support or referencing resources	- Optional file note	- Verbal or unofficial warning - No formal penalty - Allowed to resubmit or revise work with guidance
Level 1 – Minor	Minor plagiarism or misunderstanding of academic rules	- Identify and document issue - Complete Misconduct Report Form - Meet with student to discuss incident	- Send 1st warning for student misconduct	- Written warning - The assessment attempt will be marked as Not Satisfactory (NS). If the student has subsequence attempt remaining, the student can resubmit the assessment - Referred to academic support or referencing session
Level 2 – Moderate	Repeated minor offence or deliberate act such as moderate copying or unauthorised collaboration	- Escalate to Course Coordinator/ Compliance Manager - Gather supporting evidence	- Issue 2nd warning for student Misconduct	- Not Satisfactory (NS) result for the assessment Task that has been identified. - Mandatory academic integrity training

Level	Description	Trainer Actions	Admin Actions	Student Consequences
		- Participate in formal meeting with student		- Reassessment fees required to resubmit the assessment task
Level 3 – Major	Serious misconduct such as contract cheating, impersonation, document falsification, or repeated offence	- Report to Compliance manager/Course Coordinator - Submit all documentation - Attend academic misconduct hearing or panel	- Issue Final warning of Student misconduct with intention to cancle COE - Notify DHA via PRISMS if CoE affected (for international students)	- Not Yet Competent (NYC) result for the Unit of competency - Redo unit required (if approved) - Cancellation of CoE (if applicable) - Potential DHA reporting

9. Recordkeeping and Confidentiality

- All records, evidence, correspondence, and outcomes will be maintained in the Student Management System - Axcelerate for a minimum of 5 years.
- Information will be handled confidentially and only shared with authorised personnel.

10. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Trainers / Assessors	Educate, detect, and report suspected misconduct.
Course Coordinator	Investigate, facilitate student meetings, apply outcomes.
Student Support Officer	Provide guidance, academic support, and counselling.
Compliance Manager	Oversee policy application, ensure fairness and consistency.
CEO	Handle appeals and make final disciplinary decisions where necessary.

11. Related Policies

- Assessment and Reassessment policy and Procedure
- Student Code of Conduct
- Complaints and Appeals Policy
- Student Handbook

Version Control

DATE	COMMENT/ACTION	VERSION
13/05/2025	Initial document – from the brief information in student handbook, develop the in detailed policy and procedure	v1.0