Document Title	Academic Integrity and Good Practice
Policy Area	Assessment of Learners
Document Code (version #)	QAP6-2 (V2.0)
Applies to	☐ All ☒ Specific **(QQI programmes only)**
	☐ Staff only ☐ Learners only ☒ Staff and Learners

Document Owner	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
Approved by	Academic Council

Approval date	15th November 2024
Effective date	18th November 2024

Related legislation, policies, procedures, guidelines and local protocols	This policy has been designed with due regard to the following: - The National Academic Integrity Network (2020). Academic Integrity- National Principles & Lexicon for Academic Integrity. QQI - NAIN Framework for Academic Malpractice Investigation and Case Management (2023). QQI - Guidelines on Academic Integrity for Higher Education Institutions (2021), QQI - Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI - Assessment and Standards (2022 - Revised), QQI - Statutory Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes (2023), QQI

Table of Contents

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that academic integrity is consistently upheld across all QQI programmes, fostering a culture of honesty, fairness, and responsibility within the learning environment. By aligning with the NAIN Academic Integrity Guidelines (2020) and the NAIN Framework for Academic Malpractice Investigation and Case Management (2023), the policy aims to provide a clear, structured approach for identifying, investigating, and addressing instances of breaches academic integrity and good practice. This ensures that all learners are held to the same ethical standards, and that procedures for managing violations are transparent, fair, and in line with national best practices.

2. SCOPE/APPLICATION

This policy applies to all QQI programmes.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

The following responsibilities apply with respect to the implementation of this policy:

- The Academic Council approves this policy.

- The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs is responsible for ensuring its compliance.

- All staff are responsible for ensuring compliance within their respective roles.

3.1. Organisational Responsibilities

- **Promote a Culture of Academic Integrity**: Foster an environment that values and upholds the principles of academic integrity. This includes ensuring that both staff and learners are aware of the importance of academic honesty and the consequences of malpractice.

- **Provide Clear Policies and Procedures**: Develop and maintain clear, accessible policies related to academic integrity, including the procedures for reporting, investigating, and managing academic malpractice. These policies must align with relevant external policies and frameworks.

- **Support Staff and Learners**: Provide adequate resources for both staff and learners to understand academic integrity expectations. This may include workshops, seminars, and guidelines on plagiarism, referencing, and acceptable academic conduct.

- **Ensure Fair Investigation Processes**: Ensure that all cases of suspected academic malpractice are handled promptly, fairly, and consistently. This includes having in place an impartial

investigation process, following best practices and the NAIN Framework[1] for handling cases of academic malpractice.

- **Maintain Confidentiality and Transparency**: Maintain confidentiality during the investigation and resolution of academic malpractice cases, while also ensuring that decisions and penalties are communicated clearly to those involved.

- **Provide Mechanisms for Appeals**: Offer an appeals process for learners who wish to challenge the decisions made regarding academic malpractice. This appeals process should be clear and align with institutional policies and external frameworks, such as the NAIN Framework.

- **Report and Document Academic Malpractice Cases**: Maintain proper records of academic malpractice cases, including investigation reports, decisions, and outcomes. This data should be used to inform institutional improvements in teaching, assessment design, and academic integrity promotion.

- **Implement Preventative Measures:** Implement preventative strategies to reduce the likelihood of academic malpractice, such as assessment design that discourages cheating, and awareness campaigns on academic integrity.

3.2. Learner Responsibilities

- **Adherence to Academic Integrity**: Learners are required to follow the standards of academic honesty and integrity as outlined in the policy. This includes avoiding plagiarism, cheating, and any forms of assessment malpractice.

- **Declaration of Authenticity**: Learners must submit a statement of authenticity for all submitted work, confirming that it is their original work. For Moodle submissions, this is done electronically through a signed Authenticity Declaration.

- **Engagement in Learning**: Learners are responsible for ensuring their academic work reflects their understanding and learning, avoiding the use of unauthorised assistance or collaboration beyond what is allowed.

- **Responding to Suspected Allegations**: In cases of suspected academic malpractice, learners are expected to cooperate with the investigation, including attending meetings and responding to formal inquiries within the set timelines.

- **Knowledge of Penalties**: Learners must be aware of the penalties that can be imposed for academic malpractice, as outlined in this policy and any related documents.

- [1] NAIN Framework for Academic Malpractice Investigation and Case Management (2023). QQI

3.3. Tutor Responsibilities

- **Upholding Academic Standards**: Tutors are responsible for promoting academic integrity by setting clear expectations and educating learners on plagiarism, proper referencing, and acceptable academic conduct.

- **Monitoring of Academic Malpractice**: Tutors must be vigilant in detecting possible cases of academic malpractice, including plagiarism or inappropriate behavior during assessments, and report these cases to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs.

- **Investigating and Reporting**: When assessment malpractice is suspected, Tutors are required to submit a short report detailing the suspected malpractice, with evidence, to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs within 5 working days of identification.

- **Supporting the Investigation**: Tutors may be required to assist in the investigation by providing additional context or clarifications about the assessment or the learner's work.

- **Feedback and Communication**: Tutors should clearly communicate decisions and any outcomes of investigations to learners, ensuring transparency in the process, as well as providing guidance on improvement where needed.

4. DEFINITIONS

The below definitions have been extracted from the Academic Integrity: National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms (2020).

- **Academic Integrity:** Compliance with ethical and professional principles, Standards, practices and a consistent system of values, that serves as guidance for making decisions and taking actions in education, research and scholarship.

- **Academic Malpractice:** For the purpose of this policy, Academic Malpractice is deemed to include all of the following Academic Misconduct, Academic Dishonesty, Academic Impropriety, Academic Cheating and Academic Violation. This is behaviour perpetrated by individuals or institutions that transgress ethical standards held in common between other individuals and/ or groups in institutions of education, research or scholarship. For example. all actions which contravene Academic Integrity. These include breaches of examination regulations, cheating, plagiarism, impersonation, purchase of examination material, data falsification, and other acts which dishonestly use information to gain academic credit.
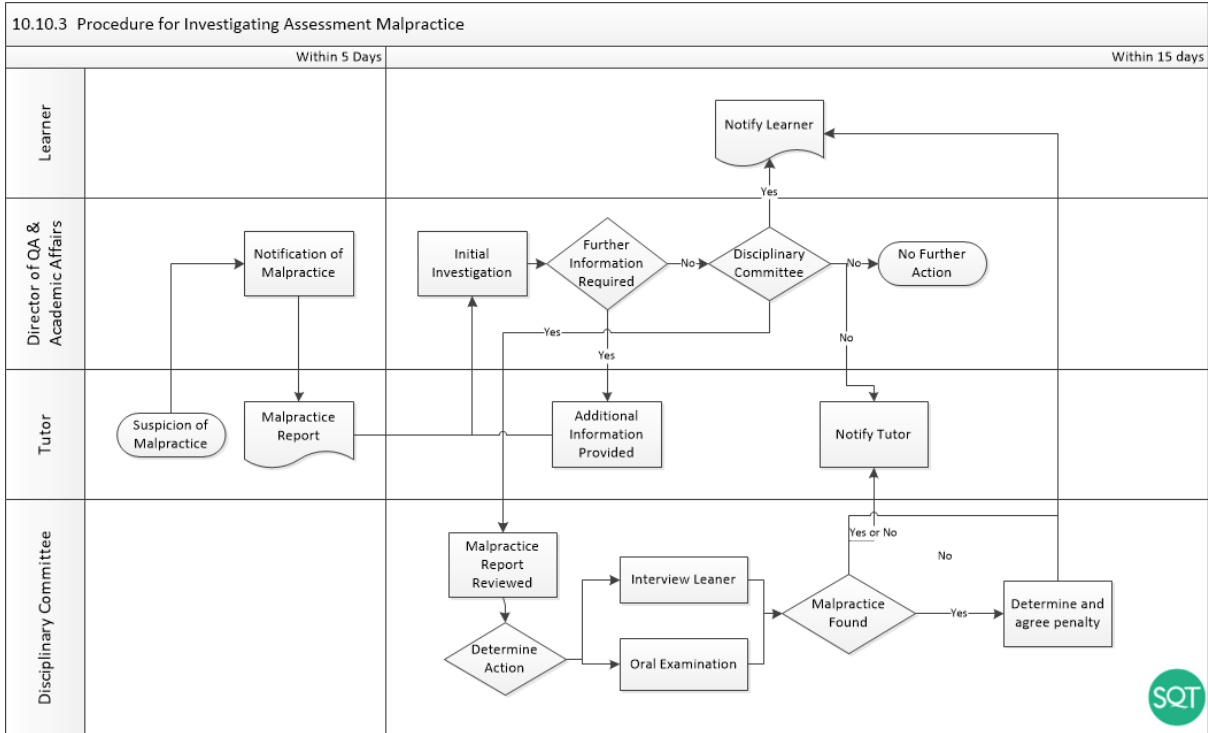
5. POLICY

SQT is dedicated to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity across all QQI programmes. This policy ensures that learners, Tutors and stakeholders adhere to the core principles of honesty, fairness, responsibility, and transparency in all academic work. SQT has adopted the guidelines

provided by the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) and tailored them to the context of the organisation. Additionally, the NAIN Framework for Academic Malpractice Investigation and Case Management is applied to ensure that any instances of academic malpractice are identified, investigated, and addressed in a clear, consistent, and fair manner. Academic Integrity Guidelines are also in place for both Tutors and learners. By maintaining these standards, SQT seeks to preserve the value and credibility of its qualifications while fostering a culture of academic excellence and integrity.

6. PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH ACADEMIC MALPRACTICE

The NAIN Framework outlines the process for managing academic malpractice from the initial identification to final case management. Under this framework, the process includes the following stages:

I. **Initial Report:** Upon suspicion of academic malpractice, a formal report is submitted using the NAIN case management protocols.

II. **Preliminary Investigation:** The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs will assess the report following NAIN's structured criteria.

III. **Formal Review:** The Disciplinary committee is convened, aligned with the NAIN Framework, to determine the severity of the offence and recommend appropriate penalties.

IV. **Learner Engagement:** Learners will have the opportunity to respond in line with the principles outlined in NAIN for fairness and due process.

V. **Final Decision and Penalty:** The outcome will be communicated based on the NAIN Framework guidelines, ensuring transparent and consistent decision-making."

10.10.3 Procedure for Investigating Assessment Malpractice

Within 5 Days — **Within 15 days**

Learner
- Notify Learner

Director of QA & Academic Affairs
- Notification of Malpractice
- Initial Investigation
- Further Information Required
- Disciplinary Committee
- No Further Action

Tutor
- Suspicion of Malpractice
- Malpractice Report
- Additional Information Provided
- Notify Tutor

Disciplinary Committee
- Malpractice Report Reviewed
- Determine Action
- Interview Leaner
- Oral Examination
- Malpractice Found
- Determine and agree penalty

SQT

Where a Tutor suspects Assessment Malpractice, SQT should be notified immediately.

1. A short report should be prepared including a marked up copy of the assessment material, together with any evidence of suspected plagiarism. The report should be forwarded to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs within 5 working days of the suspected case being identified.

2. The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs carries out an initial investigation based on the information provided using NAIN's structured criteria. He/she may seek guidance from the Tutor and/or Programme Director at this stage.

3. The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs is required to determine whether or not there is a case to answer. If the determination is that there is no case to answer for the alleged incident, the case is closed, and no formal records are maintained.

4. The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs informs the relevant Tutor of the reasons for his/her decision.

5. If the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs believes that the there is a case to answer, the learner is given the opportunity to respond and/or submit a report.

6. A Disciplinary Committee meeting is scheduled aligned with the NAIN Framework, to determine the severity of the offence and recommend appropriate penalties. The aim of the meeting is to determine whether the allegation is founded and if so, what the appropriate penalty will be. The learner is invited to attend the meeting in person and/or may be examined orally on the content of the coursework in line with the principles outlined in NAIN for fairness and due process. A record of the meeting is maintained and reported to the Examination Board or Results Approval Panel and Academic Council.

7. The learner is notified in writing of the outcome of the process including the penalty (if applicable) within 5 working days of the Disciplinary Committee meeting. The outcome will be communicated based on the NAIN Framework guidelines, ensuring transparent and consistent decision-making.

7. PENALTIES FOR CASES OF ASSESSMENT MALPRACTICE

Penalties will be determined in accordance with the NAIN Framework for Academic Malpractice Investigation and Case Management, which categorises offenses based on severity, repeat offenses, and academic level. This framework ensures that penalties are applied consistently and, in a manner, proportionate to the malpractice.

An academic judgement is made on the required penalty for a plagiarism offence using the following criteria: History of the Learner (1st, 2nd time offence), Amount/Extent of Plagiarism (% of document plagiarised), Level of the Award and Credit Weighting, Value of the Assignment.

7.1. Right to Appeal a Decision in respect of Assessment Malpractice

The learner has the right to appeal in accordance with both SQT's Academic Appeals Policy (QAP7-6) which provides clear guidelines on the appeals process and timelines. The right to appeal the decision must be made within 5 working days of the correspondence from SQT. The policy and procedure for Academic Appeals (QAP7-6) is implemented at this stage. The decision of the Appeals Board is final. The learner must be notified of the decision within 10 working days of the appeal been lodged.

8. POLICY MONITORING

Responsibility	Frequency	Methods
Director of Quality and Academic Affairs – Document Update	Per QA audit schedule	- Review of documentation as set out in QAP2-1: Ongoing Review and Update of QA Documents.
Programme Boards	Each meeting	- Review of feedback from those involved in Academic Malpractice cases.

9. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version No	Approval Date	Description of Revision	Originator	Approved By
1.0	24/11/23	New document to incorporate Academic Integrity section which was removed from QAP6-1: Assessment of Learners	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Academic Council
2.0	15/11/24	Further detail included in Section No. 3 Responsibility	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Academic Council