



Find Out More

## HEA Teaching and Learning Conference December 2025

Leading Change Together: Building the Future of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education



# Academic Integrity at University College Cork: Towards a Consistent Approach



### Institution(s) and Partner Organisations Involved

Student Records and Examinations Office – University College Cork

### Contributor(s)

Rebecca Leigh, Student Records and Examinations Office – University College Cork

### What level(s) of your institution does this work affect?

- Institutional level

### Date and Timeframe

Academic Year 2025/26 and beyond

### Alignment and Focus

#### Focus

- Best Practice in Upholding and Cultivating Academic Integrity

#### Frameworks, Policies, or Strategies Aligned

- UCC Strategic Framework 2023 – 2028
- NAIN Academic Integrity Guidelines
- NAIN Academic Integrity: National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms
- NAIN Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management

#### Discipline

- Teaching and Learning

### Impact, Lessons Learned and Future Directions

#### Impact and Evidence of Success

This initiative found initial success at UCC's Academic Board and Academic Council, where it was approved for the 2025/26 academic year. Schools/Departments across the University welcomed these changes and quickly nominated Academic Integrity Representatives to help implement the policy on a local level. Presentations were delivered by the Academic Integrity Officers from the SREO and the Skills Centre to inform staff of changes to the policy/process, as well as the resources available to assist in assessment and rubric design.

Feedback on the updated policy and processes will be sought from staff at the end of Semesters 1 and 2. This feedback will enable UCC to refine its policy and processes to ensure long-term success.

#### Future Plans and Sustainability

Further changes to the *Academic Integrity for Examinations and Assessments Policy* are planned for 2026/27. These changes aim to refine the policy and further specify definitions and processes related to academic integrity and misconduct.

It has been noted that there is a significant workload associated with investigating and reporting academic integrity issues. It is hoped that the feedback received on the policy and process may help us refine processes to ease this burden on staff.

We also plan to update the *Guide to Examinations and Assessments for Staff and Students* and create a new *Mitigation Policy*. This work will create a consistent suite of policies related to academic integrity, examinations, and assessments.

#### Top Tips

- Speak to stakeholders at the start of an initiative to gain understanding of the issues. Seek out local champions to help engage other staff and gain momentum for the change.

### Initiative Description

#### Aims and Objectives

- Update UCC's academic integrity policy and processes to align to the guidelines that were established by the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN)
- Ensure the updated policy and processes are applied consistently across the University
- Develop and implement a system to record and track academic misconduct
- Work with other UCC offices to instil a culture of academic integrity

#### Outline or Description

In 2023, University College Cork (UCC) appointed an Academic Assessment Integrity Officer in the Student Records and Examinations Office (SREO), whose focus is to put in place a coherent framework of strong policies, standard processes, and clear communication to ensure a consistent approach in identifying, recording, and penalising academic misconduct.

Initially, the Academic Assessment Integrity Officer met with stakeholders across the University to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the previous Plagiarism Policy and where change needed to occur. A report was drafted that highlighted the major issues that emerged from these discussions, as well as several proposals to address those issues. All proposals aligned with the guidelines that were established by the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) in Ireland.

Following this report, an 'Academic Integrity Working Group' was assembled to draft and update the policy and its associated processes. The resulting Academic Integrity for Examinations and Assessments Policy, Academic Misconduct Register, and updated processes and guidelines were approved in June 2025.

The updated policy and processes and newly created guidelines work hand-in-hand with guidelines and advice developed by other offices (e.g., the Skills Centre and the Teaching and Learning Centre), with the aim of instilling a culture of academic integrity.

Some of the issues that emerged from the original report and the steps to address these issues follow:

#### **The previous policy was difficult to understand and apply.**

The policy and its corresponding procedures and guidelines were re-written, using plain language standards, and re-formatted to ensure that the information is relevant, easily accessible, explicit, and understandable to both students and staff.

#### **There was no consistent terminology about academic integrity.**

All definitions related to academic integrity and academic misconduct were revised to align to those provided by the NAIN.

#### **The policy was applied inconsistently at a local level.**

The policy and its associated processes were updated to be explicit about who is responsible for investigating and reporting academic misconduct and how and when investigations and reports should be done. The 'Academic Integrity Representative' is now a recognised role, and each School/Department must nominate a representative. These individuals serve as a single point of contact for academic integrity matters and help ensure that the policy is applied consistently on a local level. They report incidents of academic misconduct to the SREO and check the Academic Misconduct Register to determine whether a student may have engaged in academic misconduct previously.

#### **The requirements for reporting and recording cases of academic misconduct were unclear.**

The updated policy requires all academic misconduct to be reported to the SREO, so a reporting form has been created to make it easier to report cases of academic misconduct. The Academic Misconduct Register has also been introduced, enabling UCC to track academic misconduct across the University. The Academic Misconduct Register complies with Irish and EU Data Protection legislation (GDPR).

#### **Guidelines were needed for investigating and penalising academic misconduct.**

The updated policy makes explicit the sanctions that can be applied for each level of academic misconduct. Guidelines have been developed to assist staff in investigating suspected academic misconduct and mapping the type of breach to the appropriate level of academic misconduct.

#### **Educational opportunities are needed for students who engage in academic misconduct.**

The updated policy requires students who engage in any level of academic misconduct to complete academic integrity training and provide proof of completion. This training, available through our Skills Centre, aims to provide students with support and prevent future instances of academic misconduct.

### Funding & Acknowledgements Details

SATLE