



Guidelines for Learners on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

INTRODUCTION

Learners at SNMCI are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. You will complete a wide variety of assignments during the course of your programme and this short guide has been developed to help you understand the importance of academic integrity in the preparation of your assignments. It is organised as a question and answer session which explains: academic integrity, plagiarism and how to ensure that your work meets the College's standards and references the College's full Academic Integrity Policy document; **QA 7.8: Academic Integrity** which can be found on the QA tab in Moodle.

What is academic integrity?

SNMCI uses the following definition of Academic Integrity as per the International Centre for Academic **Integrity (ICAI, 2013) i.e.**

Academic Integrity is

- *'a commitment, even in the face of adversity to five fundamental values: honour, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility'.*

SNMCI Considers that Academic Integrity is

- something to be achieved through good practice rather than 'misconduct' to be avoided;
- goes beyond understanding and avoiding plagiarism, although this is a key part of it.
- involves the learner demonstrating knowledge and understanding through a process of evaluation and research, expressing understanding and original ideas independently, honestly and in an appropriate academic style, using good referencing and acknowledging all sources;

At each stage of your programme you will have assignments to complete. These are designed to advance your learning and understanding of your subject by requiring you to demonstrate how well you have engaged with and understood the material you have studied. Assessment tasks will vary from subject to subject and may be e.g. essays, presentations, laboratory reports, dissertations, portfolios, reflections, examinations etc. requiring problem-solving skills, evaluation skills, reflective skills and the presentation of coherent and cogent arguments.

It is expected that in producing an assignment, you need to read and gather information from a range of sources including e.g. books, journals, official reports, newspapers, material from the Internet as well as ideas generated in discussion with lecturers and peers.



When presenting your assignment it is vital to remember that:-

- you **cite** correctly, i.e. you are explicit about any material or ideas presented by other people that you have included in your assignment;
- you **reference** correctly, i.e. you include a complete list of references acknowledging the information that you have used to inform your assignment.

These actions are **the basis of good practice** in the presentation of your assignment and this is **what academic integrity looks like!** It means that you are being honest about showing how the work of others has helped you to form your own understanding and explanation of a topic.

Why is academic integrity important?

Academic Integrity is important:-

- To uphold the academic reputation of the College and to ensure that stakeholders see SNMCI as a reputable college that maintains the standards of its awards
- To ensure that learners receive due credit for the work they submit
- To protect the interests of all learners so that there can be no academic advantage or disadvantage
- To meet SNMCI's reporting and compliance obligations as a Higher Education Provider delivering QQI validated awards.
- To assure employers that our graduates, who have been awarded degrees, have met the standards and professional requirements for the program of study e.g. Teaching Council, CORU, PSI, DCYA. .
- To assure employers that our graduates, who have been awarded degrees, have met the professional expectations of honesty, ethical standards, respect and responsibility.
- Because it is an extension of your own personal integrity.

What is plagiarism?

SNMCI understands plagiarism to be the inclusion of another person's writings or ideas or works, in any formally presented work which forms part of the assessment requirements for a module or programme, without due acknowledgement, either wholly or in part, of the original source of the material through appropriate citation.

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty and means that you have presented information or ideas belonging to someone else, as being your own original thoughts on a subject. This may happen in a number of ways, and these are explained further below, but in general there are two main ways in which you could potentially plagiarise:

- By incorporating ideas, phrases, or whole sections of text in your assignment which have been written by somebody else; or



- By failing to use proper citation methods which show all of the material you consulted in researching your assignment

What constitutes plagiarism?

Plagiarism: (From SNMCI QA 7.8: Academic Integrity)

- Attempting to pass off others' effort, intellectual property, or any other work as their own by copying without consent or failing to use academic referencing conventions (deliberately or otherwise);
- Unclear referencing: taking parts of the work from a source or sources and using them without acknowledgement in a submitted assignment. SNMCI is aware that this type of plagiarism often arises because learners are unsure how and when to reference material;
- Inadequate paraphrasing: when a learner closely follows a source and partially changes words and phrases;
- Copying another's work;
- Representing collaborative work as one's own.
- Cutting and pasting from the web – even if it is referenced;
- Previously submitted work: submitting a piece of work that has previously been submitted in another module, in another course of study, or for assessment in another college, (self-plagiarism).

Attempting to pass off others' effort, intellectual property, or any other work as their own by copying without consent or failing to use academic referencing conventions (deliberately or otherwise);

This could include getting someone else to write part or all of your assignment, using an assignment written by another learner, including those from previous years of your programme, copying parts of the work of another learner or buying an essay from an 'essay mill' or the internet. **Tip:** essays bought from the internet are usually poor value as they rarely address the question you have been asked to write about. They are usually badly written and often inaccurate.

Presenting work copied extensively with only minor textual changes from the internet, books, journals or any other source;

It is acceptable and even expected and that you will wish to incorporate the ideas of others into your work but in doing so you must be explicit that the information included is not your own original thought. **Tip:** check referencing guide



Inadequate paraphrasing: when a learner closely follows a source and partially changes words and phrases;

If you want to use somebody else's idea indirectly as an illustration of the argument you are making, be careful that you express it as a short summary or paraphrase of their argument and acknowledge that it is not your own original idea. Then cite your source to indicate that you are using someone else's ideas. **Tip:** It is not acceptable to change just a few words or phrases from someone else's text and then present the idea with citation. A **paraphrase** means you express the idea directly in your **own words**, and you must also include a reference to the original source.

Unclear referencing: taking parts of the work from a source or sources and using them without acknowledgement in a submitted assignment;

References should include all books, journals, official reports, newspapers or material from the internet, which informed the presentation of your assignment.

Tip: check referencing guidelines re how to reference internet sources correctly

Representing collaborative work as one's own;

If you are part of a study group or a group formed for assessment purposes, you may spend time discussing topics with peer. If you discuss an assignment with a fellow learner, you need to be conscious that when you write up your part that you are expressing your own ideas not the opinions expressed by others. Be careful to show your individual understanding and effort towards the task.

Can plagiarism be unintentional?

SNMCI is aware that plagiarism may arise from a range of situations e.g. not having enough time to complete an assignment properly, careless referencing (**negligence rather than deliberate intent**) or a lack of understanding of the correct referencing methods. However, these are not valid excuses and plagiarism is defined **by the action** rather than the intention.

The SNMCI **QA 7.8 Academic Integrity** policy states that

- Learners have a responsibility to make themselves aware of College policy;
- Learners are responsible for following all guidance related to good practice and academic integrity as given by academic staff;
- Learners should demonstrate initiative and be proactive about investigating good academic practice and about learning how to express themselves clearly without resorting to replicating other's words, while citing, and referencing as per guidelines.



All learners are responsible for being familiar with the College's policy and if in doubt, are encouraged to seek guidance from a member of the academic of staff.

How is plagiarism detected?

- Lecturers will be familiar with the references in your subject area and are likely to recognise particular phrases, sentence constructions and even entire paragraphs, as parts of well known published works, particularly where they are not referenced properly.
- It is routine practice in the College to use Turnitin (electronic detection) to identify instances of plagiarism.
- Lecturers will correct a whole range of assignments and that familiarity with the range of work presented will alert them to similarities in learners' work.

What happens if I plagiarise?

- In line with College philosophy and values, SNMCI, will, in the first instance, move from framing 'academic integrity issues' as 'misconduct and dishonesty' to a more supportive and educative approach, aimed at the encouragement of good academic practice and learner success;
- The College has clearly outlined its own responsibilities with regard to Academic Integrity and also outlined learner responsibilities as part of a joint effort to maintain academic standards and to avoid unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any member of the SNMCI academic community.

The following principles underpin the College's approach to dealing with breaches of academic integrity:-

- First instances of infringement of academic integrity will be viewed as arising from **negligence rather than deliberate intent** and learners will be offered extra support and instruction on acceptable academic practice. **Note:** first instances in Award Year may have further consequences.
- Each instance will be considered in light of (a), the extent of the plagiarism suspected and (b), what stage the learner has reached in his/her course of study; **Note:** first instances in Award Year may have further consequences.
- Repeated offences: Each incidence is counted over the entire duration of a learner's programme. If a learner offends a second time, the incident is deemed to be more serious;

Note: Cases of major plagiarism, plagiarism in postgraduate or award year, or cases of repeated plagiarism will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee;

Please read SNMCI QA 7.8: Academic Integrity