



## Academic integrity policy and procedure

### Introduction

The Matrix College course in Integrative Psychotherapeutic Counselling has been designed to ensure our students learn about and develop a professional and ethical way of working, based on fundamental values and principles as set out in the ethical codes of Matrix, UKCP, and other professional bodies. As part of this development, Matrix students will need to learn from and acknowledge the work of other people in the field. In creating their own pieces of academic work, students are therefore obliged to be truthful about their own contribution.

### **What is academic integrity?**

Matrix college recognises that academic integrity is a set of learned skills, with honesty, fairness and respect for others and their work at the core. Matrix will support and guide students to learn the necessary skills so that their assessed work is created with high levels of academic integrity.

In order to produce work of high academic integrity, students must produce work of their own, acknowledging by proper citation material that has been drawn from other sources or legitimate collaboration. Students who are presenting their own findings, conclusions, or clinical reflections must use their own material that is based on appropriate and ethical experience.

### **What is academic misconduct?**

Academic misconduct is a breach of the values of academic integrity. It occurs when a student cheats in an assessment or attempts to deliberately mislead a marker/examiner that the work presented is their own, when it is not. It includes (but is not limited to) plagiarism, copying the work of others, unacceptable use of artificial intelligence systems, and commissioning another person to write material on behalf of the student - who then submits it as their own for grading. (Further examples are given below).

All Matrix students have the responsibility to ensure that when they submit an item for assessment, the work which they are submitting is their own work, written in 'their own hand'. Matrix expects students to submit work on this basis, even on those occasions where they are not required to sign a declaration or tick a box to confirm it.

Students must make all efforts to ensure that they do not contravene this policy, whether through accident, omission, or deliberate intent.

## **Statement of Alignment with Middlesex University Policy.**

Matrix College is a partner institution of Middlesex University. This academic integrity policy and procedure draws directly from, and has been written to closely align with, [Middlesex's Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedures](#). If a matter arises where it is necessary to seek clarification, for the benefit of Matrix staff or students, Middlesex will be the primary reference and the University's Policy and Regulations should be taken into consideration.

This policy should be considered adjacent and linked to, the following Matrix documents:

- Info sheets on Essay Writing and Referencing
- Matrix Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct
- Matrix Artificial Intelligence Policy
- Matrix Fitness to Study Policy
- Matrix Fitness to Practice Policy

Where there are repeated contraventions, or where there is a major offence, a matter may be dealt with via the Fitness to Study Policy, or the Fitness to Practice Policy (especially if there are implications for professional registration).

It should be noted that students who face an allegation of academic misconduct will be considered 'of good standing' until a case against them has been upheld.

## **Aims of this Policy**

To ensure that when considering whether academic integrity has been breached, Matrix treats all students fairly and equally.

To set out the types of behaviour that are considered to be 'academic misconduct'.

To set out the procedures by which allegations of academic misconduct will be investigated and determined.

To set out the consequences when academic misconduct has been found.

To create a culture in which staff and students can learn from cases of academic misconduct; learning needs may be identified for students, and staff skills in teaching academic integrity can be supported.

## **Principles of Matrix's Approach to Academic Integrity**

1. When a student's work is called into question, it may be due to a minor error, poor academic practice, or unfair/dishonest academic misconduct. The decision as to what kind of issue has arisen, and its potential seriousness, is a matter for academic judgement.
2. Outcomes or penalties from cases that arise will vary according to the individual matter and the seriousness of the offence.

3. This policy and procedure applies to all work submitted for assessment on the Matrix course, including skills assessment and viva examinations.
4. In cases of plagiarism where deceptive or unfair behaviour does not appear to have been intended (due to poor referencing, paraphrasing and unintentional mistakes), the work will be marked down in terms of poor academic practice. Learning points may be identified so that the student avoids further problems.
5. Information on correct referencing is available on Moodle, and support is available at any time via the Programme Lead, Head of Curriculum, or Principal.
6. We recognise that students returning to education after a long break, or are new to Higher Education, may need some time to learn how to acknowledge their sources properly in written work. Therefore, in Year 1 the approach to signs of academic misconduct will be focused on teaching and supporting students to improve their academic practise and academic integrity rather than penalise unacceptable practice. (This applies to plagiarism and collusion only; it does not apply to other forms of academic misconduct, nor does it apply to any reassessment in year 1).
7. Students submitting work on Turnitin will be required to confirm that this admission is all their own work. In cases where assessment material is submitted directly to the marketing tutor or Programme Lead (and no declaration is required), it will be assumed that the student is submitting the work on this basis also.
8. Where potential academic misconduct is identified, Matrix staff will respond or investigate as soon as is reasonably practical - in the interest of helping the student to avoid repeat offences, by supporting their learning.
9. Before an investigation is initiated, evidence of the suspected misconduct will be gathered and stored securely.
10. If an investigation for academic misconduct is initiated, the student will receive notification of this, and the work will not be given a final grade until the process has been completed.

### **Allegations of Academic Misconduct from a Third Party**

It is possible that an allegation of misconduct may be received from other current or former students of Matrix, members of the public, or anonymously.

When a third-party report is received, Matrix will consider the nature of the potential academic misconduct and its seriousness, together with any evidence provided by the reporter or other sources, and may decide to investigate. If an investigation proceeds, no details about the investigation will be shared with the reporting third party as Matrix has obligations under Data Protection law.

A third party making a report to Matrix will be advised that their identity may be disclosed to the student concerned. Where appropriate, Matrix may agree to take precautionary steps to safeguard the person reporting (such as withholding or redacting information).

Matrix may decide not to proceed with investigation of an allegation made where the reporter insists on remaining anonymous.

## **Types of Academic Misconduct**

Middlesex University defines Academic Misconduct as

“....cheating and unethical practices ... in assessments ... where a student gains, seeks, attempts or intends to gain advantage in relation to assessments, or to aid another to gain such an advantage by unfair or improper means”

([Middlesex's Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedures, 2024](#))

Types of academic misconduct may include the following (not an exhaustive list):-

### ***Minor errors – Poor Academic Practice***

The student has tried to adhere to good academic practises but has failed to do so accurately or fully. The result may be work that does not recognise academic sources properly. Mistakes in referencing or citation, gaps in the reference list, phrases or paragraphs that are overly similar to common texts, and forgetting to insert quotation marks are common examples. Work that relies overly on external sources (by leaning too heavily on direct quotes from texts) may also be marked down.

### ***Collusion***

Two or more students have consciously collaborated in producing work which will be submitted separately by each of them, and is represented by each student as their own work. Alternatively, a student has cooperated with another person to produce their work and presents it as their own. Although peer support and study groups can be helpful in discussing an assignment, students should avoid unwittingly colluding by writing parts of an assignment for their peer or giving them access to their work.

### ***Copying***

A student knowingly presents material that has been copied from another past or present student or another person, without their knowledge, and claims it as their own. The originator of the work may not be aware that the work has been copied. This would be an example of plagiarism.

### ***Fabricating or Falsifying Data***

A student fabricates or falsifies information to pass an assessment. This may include falsifying clinical records or attendance logs, in order to claim hours which have not taken place.

### ***False declarations***

A student makes a request for an extension to a deadline, or special consideration relating to an assessment, based on false information or evidence.

### ***Plagiarism***

A student passes off someone else's work as their own, intentionally or unintentionally. Examples of plagiarism include:

- Copying word for word from another person's work, without correct and proper acknowledgement/citation of the source
- The close paraphrasing of someone else's work, by changing a few words or the order of some words, without correct and proper acknowledgement/citation of the source. The use of AI tools to paraphrase (and therefore mask plagiarism) is also an offence.
- Failure to reference appropriately or identify the source material. This may include fake referencing (making up quotations and or fake citations, where no such material exists). It may also include attributing a quote or concept to an author from whom it did not originate.
- Deliberately presenting a concept that has originated from somebody else and claiming it as one's own.

### ***Self-plagiarism***

A student submits the same piece of work, or a substantial part of it, more than once with the intent of having the work graded again – without acknowledging that they are doing so. Unless they properly reference their own work, it will be regarded as self-plagiarism.

### ***Purchasing or Commissioning Work from Others***

A student buys, or attempts to buy, some work from elsewhere in order to submit it as their own – for example, from the internet. So-called 'essay mills' are illegal, and paying someone else (even a person known to the student) to write work for assessment is unacceptable. Where a student requests someone (paid or unpaid) to proof-read their work, this may be acceptable - provided the content of the work is not substantially altered and the work is still in the student's 'own hand'.

### ***Attempting to Gain Advantage by Unfair or Improper Means***

A student tries to use technological applications or other 'hacks' to circumvent assessment-checking software. This may include, for example, using text-replacement tools in an attempt to deceive the Turnitin system, or using tools to disguise the use of Artificial Intelligence to produce text on behalf of the student. It may also include the use of images and irregular formatting in an attempt to deceive the Turnitin system.

Any attempt to gain an advantage in the assessment process, by directly or indirectly influencing members of academic staff, will be treated as academic misconduct.

### ***Unauthorised Use of Artificial Intelligence***

A student uses AI in a way that is prohibited by the Matrix College Artificial Intelligence Policy – for instance, by using generative AI to produce text that will form part, parts or the whole of an assignment.

### **Roles and responsibilities under this Policy**

#### **Matrix College**

Matrix will make clear to students the importance of Academic Integrity. Appropriate information will be given to students at the beginning of their course, including a copy of this Policy. Through the course, Matrix will provide information and teaching that demonstrates good practice – this will include Essay Writing workshops, written Info Sheets, one-to-one support from tutors, and any other advice that may be helpful from time to time.

Matrix will encourage all staff to be aware of these resources, and to have a high level of current knowledge regarding Academic Integrity; in particular, referencing, plagiarism, and the use of AI. Marking staff will have a working knowledge of how plagiarism and other infractions are detected and will identify breaches in line with the procedure.

Matrix will ensure that poor academic practice is responded to appropriately, by identifying it promptly and offering support in whatever learning area is identified. This may include identifying feedback for teaching and/or resources, as well as learning needs of students.

Feedback will be given to students who have shown poor academic practice in their work, for instance by poor and inconsistent referencing, or relying too heavily on direct quotes of sources. Work will be graded according to the severity of the issue and will take into account the developmental level of the student (i.e. Year 1/2/3).

#### **Matrix Students**

Students must make themselves familiar with this Policy, and the related Matrix documents mentioned above. Students should make use of the support given to learn and develop their academic skills – including workshops, written guidance and other support offered by Matrix from time to time.

Students are expected to pay attention to feedback of all kinds, which includes written feedback concerning academic practice. Where they are uncertain about how to improve their skills, students should seek support and guidance from staff.

Students should be aware of the different types of academic offences and their consequences. In order to avoid being troubled by Academic Integrity allegations, students

should make use of the Turnitin ‘Similarity Score’ facility, which helps to identify problem areas in their work (possible plagiarism).

Students are strongly encouraged, in co-operation with Matrix staff, to each play their part in maintaining a community of high Academic Integrity standards.

## **Procedures**

**These procedures apply to all assessed work** (including essays, short written tasks, reflective journals, presentations, and any other assessment tasks which may be set from time to time). Contraventions will be considered according to the categories detailed in section H1 (p17) of [Middlesex’s Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedures](#)

### **1 – Initial assessment by marking tutors**

1.1. Where marking/assessing tutors suspect a student of poor academic practice, due to poor referencing, paraphrasing and unintentional mistakes (corresponding to Category A in Middlesex policy) – and it does not seem that deception has been the intention – the tutors will mark the work. The grade will reflect the student’s over-reliance on external sources or inconsistent acknowledgement of sources. Feedback will be given in writing, giving clear examples of the mistakes made. Guidance and support should be offered, and the student should be reminded of the resources available to assist them.

1.2. Where marking/assessing tutors are uncertain about whether deception has been intended, they may refer the matter to the Principal as in (1.3) below.

1.3. Where marking/assessing tutors suspect a student of breaching the principles of Academic Integrity, beyond the level of poor academic practice, they will pass the work to the Principal. They will document the passages that are of concern for plagiarism, unauthorised use of AI or other misconduct, and pass these details to the Principal.

1.3a. Where the marking/assessing tutor is the Principal, and a breach such as in (1.3) may have occurred, the work and details of possible infractions will be passed to the Head of Curriculum.

1.4. In exceptional circumstances, where misconduct is discovered after the deadline for submission, or after the marking cycle, the matter may be investigated retrospectively at the discretion of Matrix. Where a student has already graduated, and the matter is of a serious enough nature, Matrix may consult with Middlesex University to discuss the possible revocation of an award.

## **2 - Second assessment by Academic Integrity Tutor**

2.1. At this stage, the Principal (or someone nominated by the Principal) acts as Academic Integrity Tutor (AIT). The AIT will determine if the matter should be treated as a case of Poor Academic Practice (in which case it will be returned to the marking tutors as in 1.1 above).

2.2. If the AIT confirms misconduct which falls in category B, C or D then the case will be referred to an Academic Conduct Panel. Copies of the work, and details of the alleged breaches, along with any other evidence/supporting material (such as copies of source material that may have been plagiarised, or AI responses to assessment-related prompts) will be sent to the panel members for them to examine independently.

2.3. The Academic Conduct Panel will normally consist of the Head of Curriculum, the External Moderator, and a tutor who has not been involved with the marking of the student's work during the current academic year. Other panel members may be co-opted at the discretion of the Principal. The Head of Curriculum will act as Chair.

## **3 - Procedure for Investigation by Academic Misconduct Panel**

3.1. As soon as reasonably practicable following the receipt of the materials in (2.2), the Panel members will decide if there are reasonable grounds at first sight to suggest that assessment regulations have been breached.

3.2. If the Panel determines that there are no reasonable grounds, or that the contraventions represent only Poor Academic Practice, then the matter will be returned to the marking/assessing tutor who will grade the work on its merits as in (1.1).

3.3. If the Panel decide that there are reasonable grounds to suggest that the assessment regulations have been breached, they will write to the student(s) concerned.

3.3a. The student will be informed of the allegation and asked to attend a meeting with the Panel, within 15 working days of the letter (or longer, if this coincides with a recognized holiday period such as Easter or the Summer break). This meeting may be face-to-face, or may be held online if necessary.

3.3b. The student will be given the names of the Panel members. They will be advised that if a meeting is to proceed, they may object to the appointment of one of the Panel members.

3.3c. Copies of the work (with alleged breached marked) together with copies of any other supporting evidence will be sent at the same time, along with a copy of this Policy and Procedure.

3.3d. The student will be given 10 working days to indicate to the Panel whether they intend to respond in person at a meeting, or in writing.

3.3e. The student may decide, instead of attending a Panel meeting, to make their representations in writing to the Panel who will meet in their absence. If this is their choice, they will be requested to provide a written statement in response, within 10 working days of the letter/email. The student will be asked to provide an explanation of how the alleged breaches may have occurred, stating any mitigating circumstances which may be taken into account if a penalty is incurred.

3.3f. In the event that the student fails to respond to the letter in (3.3), and all reasonable efforts to make contact with them have been unsuccessful, the Panel will meet in their absence.

3.4. The work will remain ungraded until the matter is resolved.

3.4b. If the investigation takes place around the time of a Progression meeting, then (unless there are other reasons to decline the student's progression) this will proceed, whilst the student is in good standing. The student will be advised (at section 3.3) that their progression may be affected if the matter results in a failed module. They will be advised that if they start the next academic year before matter is resolved, their place on that year is provisional pending the outcome of the investigation, and may be withdrawn. If necessary, an extraordinary Progression Meeting may be convened by the Principal to consider the matter and its consequences.

#### **4 - Consideration of Student Response**

4.1. If the student has objected to the appointment of one Panel member (see (3.3b) then an alternative will be nominated by the Chair. No further objections will be accepted.

##### *Panel Considers Written Statement and/or Evidence*

4.2. The Panel will meet to consider the evidence provided by the marking/assessing tutors and the AIT. They will examine, on the balance of probabilities, whether the allegation(s) should be upheld or dismissed.

4.2a. The decision of the Panel, including any sanction to be applied, will be reported to the Principal and the Academic Board. The outcome will be processed according to Section 5 (Outcome of Investigation).

##### *Panel Meets with Student*

4.3. The Panel will meet with the student to hear their case. This meeting may take place face-to-face or online.

4.3a. The Panel may request that the marking/assessing tutor in (1.3) attends the meeting as a witness.

4.3b. The meeting will take place in the absence of a student who has decided not to attend (as in 3.3e) or does not respond to communications (as in 3.3f), or indicates they will attend but then does not attend.

4.4. All proceedings and papers associated with the meeting will be confidential. The Chair will establish this contract at the beginning of the meeting. Failure of any Panel member or student to adhere to this confidentiality may be grounds for an Ethics complaint.

4.5. The student will have the right to be accompanied by a companion, who will be a member of Matrix staff or the current student body. The student will be allowed to submit

written and/or oral evidence to the meeting. Legal representation is not allowed at a Panel meeting.

#### *Procedure for the Investigation Panel In Session*

4.6. The Chair will have the discretion to organise and structure the meeting as they see fit, in order to achieve the aims of the meeting:

- i) to clarify evidence as necessary by questioning those who have submitted it
- ii) to enable the student to dispute the allegation
- iii) to enable the Panel to reach a decision.

4.7. The Panel will not meet in the absence of any of the three Panel members.

4.8. A meeting held online may be recorded, at the discretion of the Chair, in case there are any technical or connectivity issues for Panel members. The meeting recording will be deleted immediately once the Panel has reached a conclusion of the case.

4.9. After all evidence has been heard, the student (and their companion if present) will be asked to withdraw, so the Panel can discuss its decision in private.

4.10. The Panel will consider the evidence as will reach a decision by a majority vote whether, on balance of probabilities, the student has breached the academic regulations.

4.11. The Panel will consider the actions of the student, not their intentions. It is noted that the Middlesex position is that “not meaning to” is not an acceptable defence for academic misconduct.

4.12. The student and their companion will be recalled to the meeting and informed of the decision, by the Chair of the Panel. A written notification will be sent to the student within 5 working days of the meeting. This will include a notification of any sanction to be applied, if any allegations are upheld.

### **5 - Outcome of an Investigation**

5.1. Where no allegation has been upheld by the Panel, the work will be assessed on its merits as in (1.1). All record of the alleged misconduct will be deleted from the student's record. Poor academic practice will be recorded in the feedback for the piece(s) of work concerned.

5.2. Where an allegation of academic misconduct is upheld, either by the admission of the student or because the Panel have determined it, the Panel will consider the category of the breach which are detailed in section H1 (p17) of [Middlesex's Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedures](#)

5.2a. The Panel will agree an appropriate sanction, based on the category of offence(s) identified, and which are detailed in section H (p.15) of [Middlesex's Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedures](#)

5.2b. Where there is more than one allegation upheld, each one will be considered and sanctions will be agreed accordingly.

5.3. For category B and C offences, where the penalty does not involve re-taking a module, the Principal will note the penalty and its impact on the grade profile of the student.

5.4. For some category B and C offences, the Panel may consider that the student should fail the 'personal readiness' assessment. In this case, the student may complete the academic year but may not pass the final module of the year.

5.5. For category B and C offences where the module must be re-taken, the Principal will make arrangements for the student to be moved to the Part-Time Pathway. Because of the way the Matrix course is structured, they will be required to begin the academic year again.

5.6. For category D offences where the penalty involves awarding a lower qualification, expulsion, or revoking an award, the Principal will be responsible for communicating the decision to the student and will raise the matter with the Middlesex University Link Tutor and/or the Partner Operations team at Middlesex.

### *Appeals*

5.7. A student may appeal against the decision to impose a penalty. The procedure outlined in the Matrix College Academic Appeals Policy should be followed.

5.8. It should be noted that an appeal may only be accepted under the following conditions (as stated in the appeals Policy)

- (a) That parts of the documented assessment procedure were not applied and that this **procedural irregularity** which has disadvantaged the student was significant enough to have materially affected the decision/recommendation made, rendering it unsound.
  
- (b) That the decision-making body took a **decision which no reasonable person would find comprehensible**. Disagreement with the decision does not make it manifestly unreasonable. To apply this ground, you must provide substantive argumentation as to why no reasonable person could have arrived at the decision that was made.

Document name	Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure		
Owner	Principal	Review Lead	Quality Manager
Approving Committee	Ops Team		
Last review	January 2026	Next review	December 2026
Amendments since last review	Detail of Revision  Version control added	Date of Revision  January 2026	Revision approved by  Ops Team

