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1. Introduction

The Academic Integrity Policy outlines ITAC's educational approach to maintaining honest and ethical academic practices. This policy provides clear guidelines for students developing their skills and knowledge while ensuring assessment submissions reflect their true abilities. It details how staff and students should respond to academic concerns, with an emphasis on support and skill development rather than punishment.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all ITAC students and staff involved in training and assessment activities. It covers written assignments, practical tasks, workplace demonstrations, portfolio evidence and verbal assessments across all qualifications and courses offered by ITAC.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Support students in developing proper academic practices
- Guide staff in managing academic integrity matters
- Establish clear standards for using learning support tools
- Ensure assessment evidence reflects actual student capability
- Maintain quality and credibility of ITAC qualifications

4. Definitions

Academic integrity: Being honest in completing training and assessment tasks. This includes submitting work that is your own, properly noting when you use other sources, and making sure workplace demonstrations show your true skills.

Academic misconduct: Dishonest or improper behaviour during study or assessment. This includes copying work, having others complete your assessments, working too closely with other students on individual tasks, or misusing AI tools.

Plagiarism: Using someone else's work or ideas and pretending they are your own. This includes copying from websites, textbooks or other students, as well as rewording other sources without saying where they came from.

Ghost writing: Having someone else complete your work, such as a family member writing your assignments or heavily editing your responses. This includes paying others to write assignments or having friends or family complete assessment tasks for you.

Collusion: Working with others on tasks meant to be done individually. While students can study together and discuss topics, each person must submit their own unique work that shows their individual understanding.

AI tools: Software programs that can create written responses based on user input. While these tools can help with writing and editing, they must be used appropriately so assessment responses still show the student's own knowledge.

Language support tools: Programs like Grammarly that help with spelling, grammar and sentence structure. These tools are allowed as they don't change the meaning of student work.

5. Student Responsibilities

Students have a responsibility to get the most out of their learning while helping maintain the value of their qualification. They can do this by:

1. Submit work that shows their own understanding and capabilities
2. Complete theory assessments independently while asking for help when needed
3. Use AI tools and language assistance programs appropriately:
 - Include their own knowledge and experiences
 - Add relevant personal examples and workplace context
 - Review content for accuracy and relevance
 - Make sure responses show their personal understanding
4. Note any sources used by providing links or naming publications if needed
5. Complete workplace demonstrations and discussions to show their skills and knowledge
6. Keep drafts and notes from their study and assessment work
7. Study with other students if desired but write answers in their own words
8. Let trainers know about any academic concerns or questions
9. Ask for help early if unsure about requirements or finding assessments challenging
10. Work openly with trainers when discussing any concerns, maintaining positive communication throughout the process

6. Staff Responsibilities

ITAC staff are responsible for supporting students' learning journey while maintaining assessment integrity. They will:

1. Take a supportive, educational approach by:
 - Assuming positive intent from students
 - Looking for ways to help students demonstrate their knowledge
 - Focusing on learning outcomes rather than rigid processes
 - Finding constructive solutions that keep students engaged
2. Provide clear guidance about assessment requirements by:
 - Explaining expectations in student-friendly language
 - Offering examples of quality responses
 - Remaining flexible about how understanding can be demonstrated
 - Supporting different learning and communication styles
3. Build students' confidence and capabilities through:
 - Regular encouragement and positive reinforcement
 - Teaching effective study strategies
 - Supporting development of independent learning skills
 - Helping students understand the value of authentic work
 - Celebrating progress and improvement
4. Maintain assessment integrity through positive approaches:
 - Verbal verification of critical concepts during workplace visits
 - Knowledge discussion during practical demonstrations
 - Consistent education about academic integrity requirements
 - Regular authentication of student work through friendly discussion
5. Give constructive feedback that:
 - Highlights what students are doing well
 - Suggests ways to enhance understanding
 - Maintains an encouraging, supportive tone
 - Focuses on growth and development
6. Focus on evidence of understanding by:
 - Accepting that students may express their knowledge differently

- Looking beyond perfect presentation and writing ability
 - Considering various ways to demonstrate competency
 - Valuing authentic understanding over polished responses
7. Address any concerns informally and supportively by:
- Having friendly conversations about better ways to show learning
 - Offering additional help or explanation when needed
 - Finding alternative ways for students to demonstrate knowledge
 - Maintaining a positive, solution-focused approach
8. Work with other trainers to:
- Share effective support strategies
 - Develop consistent, student-friendly approaches
 - Find innovative ways to help students succeed
 - Support each other in maintaining positive practices
9. Stay current with technological developments by:
- Understanding and using new tools to better support students
 - Learning how technology can enhance student learning
 - Using personal experience with these tools to provide better guidance
 - Helping students use technology effectively and appropriately
10. Maintain professional standards while protecting student dignity by:
- Handling all student matters with complete privacy
 - Taking a discreet approach to academic concerns
 - Applying policies with flexibility and understanding
 - Always seeking ways to support student success

7. Academic Conduct Guidelines

This section explains different types of academic conduct and provides clear guidelines for maintaining academic integrity while supporting your learning journey. We recognise that understanding academic requirements can be challenging, especially when using new technologies, so we've provided detailed guidance below.

7.1 Plagiarism Guidelines

Plagiarism means using someone else's work or ideas without proper acknowledgment. While the concept is straightforward, knowing exactly what needs acknowledgment can sometimes be unclear.

Here's what you need to know:

When you must reference:

- Direct quotes from any source
- Statistics or specific data
- Unique ideas or theories from others
- Industry-specific information that isn't common knowledge

You don't need to reference:

- Your own experiences and observations
- Standard practices covered in your learning materials
- General knowledge that's widely known in the industry

Provide a simple reference by including the website link or publication name below your response.

While formal academic referencing (like APA style) isn't required for your assessments, we encourage you to practice these skills as they'll be valuable in future study and professional writing. The key is ensuring that anyone reading your work can see where you found important information.

7.2 Collusion and Group Work

While studying together enhances learning and reflects real workplace practices, each student must still demonstrate their own unique understanding. Here's how to maintain this balance:

Acceptable group activities:

- Discussing concepts and sharing understanding through study groups
- Practicing skills together and giving constructive feedback
- Reviewing each other's work to suggest improvements
- Supporting each other's learning journey through encouragement and discussion
- Working together on assessments while developing individual responses
- Helping peers understand concepts they find challenging

Activities that cross the line:

- Sharing exact answers that others copy or slightly modify

- Writing identical or nearly identical responses
- Using another student's work as your own
- Submitting responses that don't reflect your personal understanding

The key difference is that while you can absolutely complete assessments together as a study group – and we encourage this collaborative learning – each person must write their own unique response that demonstrates their individual understanding. Think of it like a group of chefs learning a new recipe together: you can discuss techniques, share tips, and cook side by side, but each person's final dish will be slightly different based on their own interpretation and understanding of the process.

7.3 Support with Written Assessments

Writing assessment responses is a highly personal task that demonstrates your unique understanding and professional capabilities. While it's natural to want help, especially if you're developing your writing skills, having others write your responses prevents you from building essential professional abilities.

Understanding Appropriate Help

Family and friends can support your studies by:

- Providing quiet study time and space
- Helping with time management
- Offering encouragement and motivation
- Discussing concepts at a general level
- Basic proofreading for spelling and grammar only
- Helping you find resources or information

Where Support Should Stop

The following types of help prevent genuine learning and skill development:

- Having someone write your responses, even partially
- Getting others to heavily edit or rewrite your work
- Asking family members to "fix" your writing
- Having someone translate your thoughts into English
- Getting substantial help with wording or phrasing

Building Your Skills

If you're finding writing challenging:

- Start with brief, simple responses that show your knowledge
- Use the language tools (like Grammarly)
- Ask your trainer for guidance on expressing your ideas
- Practice writing a little bit each day
- Focus on clear communication rather than perfect English
- Remember that your real-world experience and understanding matter more than polished writing

Remember, we'd rather see your own writing with some errors than perfectly written responses that don't reflect your genuine understanding. Your unique perspective and growing professional capabilities are what matter most.

7.4 Understanding AI Use in Your Studies

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT have become part of modern study and work environments. While these tools can seem helpful, our experience shows that students often achieve better results and develop stronger professional skills by relying primarily on their own writing abilities. Let's explore why this matters and how to approach AI use thoughtfully.

Why We Encourage Limited AI Use

Our experienced trainers, who assess thousands of submissions, can readily identify AI-generated content through its distinctive patterns, tone, and structure. We often find that students who rely heavily on AI:

- Struggle to demonstrate their real understanding during workplace visits
- Take longer to complete assessments due to extensive editing needs
- Miss opportunities to develop essential communication skills
- Submit responses with industry-inappropriate terminology or concepts
- Need additional verbal assessments to verify their knowledge

Most importantly, your own writing – even with some grammatical errors or simpler language – gives us a much clearer picture of your understanding than polished AI content. We're assessing your knowledge and capabilities, not your ability to edit AI outputs.

Hint: The "time-saving" promise of AI can be misleading – by the time you generate content, fix terminology, add examples, edit for accuracy, and potentially complete verbal assessments to verify your knowledge, you could have written a genuine response that clearly shows your understanding.

Examples of inappropriate AI use include:

- Multiple responses containing factual errors a student who completed the learning would quite easily recognise
- Content irrelevant to the Australian context, industry, and state or territory
- Responses completed in timeframes that preclude basic review and editing i.e. it is clear that the student copied and pasted answers from AI with no or little editing
- Consistent absence of required personal or workplace examples, or vague examples lacking detail which is typical of AI
- Large number of responses that are entirely AI-generated with no evidence of student input or review
- Work submitted that leads us to believe the student does not possess the knowledge required to use the relevant concept in the field

Guidelines for Those Who Choose to Use AI

While we strongly encourage writing your own responses, we understand some students will use AI.

If you do:

- Keep AI-generated content to less than 50% of your response (aim for 30% to be safe)
- Always add your own examples and experiences in your own words
- Thoroughly review all AI content for accuracy – do not assume accuracy
- Edit extensively to include your personal voice – never copy and submit AI text with edits
- Be prepared for verbal assessment if requested by your trainer
- Understand that identifying AI use is subjective and we may require additional verification of your knowledge

A Better Approach

Instead of relying on AI, we encourage you to:

- Write naturally in your own voice
- Include real examples from your experience
- Focus on showing your practical understanding

- Use simple, clear language
- Trust that your knowledge is valuable, even if your writing isn't perfect

Remember that language support tools like Grammarly are always acceptable - these help with grammar and spelling without changing your actual message.

7.5 Language Support Tools

Language assistance tools like Grammarly follow the same basic principles as AI use - while they can help with basic writing mechanics, they often create more challenges than benefits. The same 50% guideline applies, as heavily edited work will be treated like AI-generated content from our perspective. While using Grammarly might seem quick and helpful, it can trigger additional verification steps if your writing appears too polished or artificial. You'll actually save time by submitting work in your natural voice, even with minor errors, since we're focused on assessing your understanding of early childhood concepts rather than your writing mechanics. Keep it simple – your genuine understanding matters far more than perfect writing – and natural expression makes it easier for us to verify your authentic knowledge.

8. Process for Academic Concerns

We take an educational approach to academic integrity, focusing first on helping students develop good practices while recognising our responsibility to maintain qualification standards. Students earlier in their course naturally receive more guidance as they develop their study skills, while those in later subjects are expected to better understand requirements.

When reviewing assessments, trainers classify the level of external assistance (like AI use or language tools) into three categories:

Low Level External Assistance (Less than 50% of responses show signs)

Actions we may take include:

- Constructive feedback about writing more authentically
- Suggestions for including more personal examples
- Reminders about academic integrity expectations
- Opportunity to revise affected responses
- Focus on developing better study practices

High Level External Assistance (50-75% of responses show signs):

Actions we may take include:

- Required resubmission of most or all affected questions
- Provide specific guidance about acceptable practices
- Follow-up review of revised work
- Additional support offered if needed

Excessive External Assistance (Over 75% of responses show signs):

Actions we may take include:

- Referral to trainer manager
- Complete reassessment usually required
- Require a verification discussion about key concepts
- Referral to academic support services for review
- Development of improvement plan

In all cases:

- Students are encouraged to communicate openly about challenges
- Support services are available to help develop study skills
- Focus remains on helping students demonstrate their real capabilities
- Early intervention aims to prevent recurring issues
- Students are expected to engage constructively with feedback

Important Note About Plagiarism

While we maintain a supportive approach to AI and language tool use, plagiarism is treated as a more serious concern. Copying content directly from websites, other students, or publications and attempting to pass it off as your own work represents clear academic misconduct. This is particularly serious when students copy entire sections of text without acknowledgment.

Remember that our goal is supporting your learning while ensuring your qualification reflects genuine professional capabilities. Most academic concerns around AI and language tools are resolved through supportive guidance, especially when students work openly with their trainers to address any challenges.

9. Student Support and Resources

ITAC provides direct assistance to help students develop strong academic practices. Through regular trainer guidance and study resources, students can build the skills needed to maintain academic

integrity. Our support team works closely with students to address any challenges early and find constructive solutions in line with our educative approach to academic misconduct.

10. Review and Monitoring

We regularly evaluate and update our academic integrity practices to ensure they remain effective and practical. Our approach includes:

- Active use and testing of emerging technologies by staff
- Regular collection and analysis of student feedback
- Updates that reflect changing educational practices
- Staff development in new assessment approaches
- Annual policy review with industry input

This ongoing review process helps us maintain high standards while adapting to evolving educational needs. We particularly focus on keeping our approach current with technological changes that affect how students learn and complete assessments.

APA Referencing Guidelines for ITAC Students

Referencing is an important part of academic writing, as it allows you to acknowledge the sources that you have used in your work and demonstrate the credibility of your arguments. APA (American Psychological Association) is one of the most commonly used referencing styles in academic writing. In this list of hints, we will provide you with some tips on how to use APA style to reference your sources correctly. Below is some general advice to assist students in successfully implementing APA.

- Familiarise yourself with the APA referencing style guide: Before you start referencing your work, take the time to read through the APA style guide. This will give you a good understanding of the conventions of APA referencing, including how to format in-text citations and reference lists.
- Use in-text citations: Whenever you use information from a source in your work, you should include an in-text citation. This citation should include the author's name and the date of publication, e.g. (Smith, 2021). If the source has multiple authors, include all the surnames in the citation, e.g. (Smith & Jones, 2021).
- Include a reference list: At the end of your work, include a reference list that lists all the sources you have cited in your work. This should be arranged alphabetically by the author's surname.
- Format your reference list correctly: Your reference list should be formatted according to APA style. This means that each entry should include the author's name, publication date, title, and publication information.
- Use online tools: There are many online tools available that can help you with referencing your work in APA style. These tools can help you to format your in-text citations and reference lists correctly.
- Avoid plagiarism: Remember that simply changing a few words from a source is still plagiarism. When you use information from a source, make sure that you either quote it directly (and include a citation) or rephrase it in your own words (and include a citation).

Referencing using APA style can seem daunting at first, but with a little bit of practice, it can become second nature. Remember to use in-text citations, include a reference list, and format your work correctly. If you have any doubts, consult the APA style guide or ask your trainer for help.