

Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure

Purpose and Scope

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) regards academic dishonesty as a serious act of misconduct and a breach of its code of conduct in accordance with Regulation A7.

The purpose of this policy is to define academic dishonesty, outline the process for investigating claims, and detail the potential outcomes of those investigations.

RANZCOG considers academic dishonesty to include the following:

- 1) **Plagiarism** - Failure to reference work or ideas without due acknowledgment or consent.
- 2) **Cheating** – any dishonest behaviour that gives a person an unfair advantage. This may include unfair access to information, collusion or illegitimate cooperation.
- 3) **Recycling** - Presenting work that has already been presented for another purpose.
- 4) **Fabrication of information** – Presenting falsified information, erroneous evidence, or manipulated data that is knowingly incorrect or manipulated to create the impression of being genuine

1. Types of Academic Misconduct

RANZCOG recognises the following as all types of academic misconduct.

1.1 Plagiarism

RANZCOG defines plagiarism to be the failure to reference work or ideas without acknowledgment or consent, whether the work was published or otherwise, copied directly or paraphrased. Plagiarism may arise either by deliberate intent or through carelessness.

1.2 Cheating

RANZCOG defines cheating as any dishonest behaviour that gives a person an unfair advantage. This may include arranging access to notes or other information relating to an examination while it is in progress; communicating with other candidates during an examination; discussing the exam with someone outside of the exam venue while it is in progress; gaining access to exam questions prior to the exam day; removing or distributing examination questions or related information to others outside the examination venue; contract cheating or impersonation, where an individual undertakes or completes an assessment on behalf of another; presenting the work of a group of individuals for assessment when an individual effort has been stipulated.

1.3 Recycling

RANZCOG defines recycling as presenting work for assessment that has already been presented for another purpose. This includes the RANZCOG Training Program or any other course of study unless a prospective approval is granted for the reuse of work.

1.4 Fabrication of Information

RANZCOG defines fabrication of data as the intentional misrepresentation of information, including the reporting of research that was never conducted, or the alteration or manipulation of information to suit a desired outcome.

2. Investigating Claims

2.1. Allegation(s)

Where an assessor determines that reasonable grounds for suspecting plagiarism exist, the assessor must notify the relevant senior RANZCOG staff member in writing and provide all available evidence, including a copy of the concerned person's work, allegations made against the concerned person and references to the plagiarised work.

2.2. Determination

The RANZCOG committee responsible for overseeing the activity or assessment will be charged with reviewing cases of academic misconduct. The investigation may be delegated to a subcommittee where the Committee deems it appropriate. A non-exhaustive list of allegations and corresponding committees is given in Appendix 1.

In cases where the Chair of the relevant Committee or Subcommittee has not been involved in the initial assessment of the trainee's work, the information provided by the assessor is to be passed on to the Chair of the relevant Committee or Subcommittee, who, in consultation with the RANZCOG Chief Executive Officer (CEO), will decide whether or not to proceed with the matter. Where the Chair has been involved in the initial assessment, or any other factor(s) preclude their involvement, the Deputy Chair of the relevant Committee will make the decision in consultation with the CEO.

2.3. Notice to the Concerned Person

RANZCOG will inform the concerned person by email that they will be required to appear before the relevant Committee or Subcommittee at its next scheduled meeting in order to answer allegations of plagiarism. The trainee will receive by post the same information regarding the allegations that are provided to members of the relevant Committee or designated subcommittee.

2.4. Elevation to Fellowship or Conferral of Other RANZCOG Qualifications/ Awards

No person shall be eligible for elevation to Fellowship or receipt of any other RANZCOG Qualifications/ Awards while formal matter relating to plagiarism or assisting in plagiarising is under consideration or pending consideration.

3. Academic Misconduct Hearing

Allegations of academic misconduct are to be investigated and dealt with in a manner following the principles and procedures associated with procedural fairness and natural justice by the College committee that is responsible for overseeing the assessment task or activity in question. Where the Committee deems it appropriate, the task may be delegated to a subcommittee

At least twenty-one (21) days prior to the hearing date, the concerned person will be advised in writing about the upcoming hearing. The notice should include:

- the date, time and location of the hearing;
- the membership of the Committee or Subcommittee;
- the right of the concerned person to present their case ; and
- the right of the concerned person to have a support person, colleague or mentor present at the hearing in an observer capacity. The concerned person is not entitled to be accompanied by a legal representative (or any other person who shall act as an advocate).

The concerned person is required to lodge all written submissions and copies of any documents and records upon which they wish to rely to the relevant Committee or subcommittee fourteen (14) days prior to a academic misconduct hearing. Additional information provided after the submission date will

only be considered if the Chair of the relevant Committee or Subcommittee considers that the material is of significance to the matter.

At the commencement of the hearing, the Committee is required to outline claims against the concerned person. The Committee must allow the concerned person every opportunity to state their case and correct any relevant statement that, in their opinion, may prejudice their case.

4. Outcomes

Following the hearing, the Committee will provide an outcome via email to the concerned person and any other RANZCOG body as may be required to facilitate further processes required as a result of the outcome. The outcome will provide reasons for their findings and follow-up actions or consequences of findings.

If the concerned person is cleared of the misconduct allegation, no further action will be taken.

Where it is determined that a concerned person is guilty of academic misconduct, one or more of the following may be decided by the committee :

- require the trainee to resubmit the assessment task.
- the concerned person will receive a letter from the Chair of the relevant Committee that is responsible for overseeing the assessment task in question, reprimanding the person for their misconduct.
- be provided with a written warning and notified of consequences for any future acts of plagiarism.
- require the person to undertake a prescribed course, at the person's expense, on appropriate methods of avoiding plagiarism and/or professional ethics.
- be removed from any RANZCOG role or Committee
- A copy of the outcome letter and the written warning will be retained in the concerned person's file.

5. Subsequent Offence(s)

Where a person is found guilty of a second or further act of academic dishonesty, the matter and all related documents shall be referred to the Professional Standards Committee (PSC). PSC will consider the matter pursuant to relevant Regulations and, at its discretion, impose penalties it determines are appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to, withdrawing credit for a period of training and/or suspension or a recommendation of removal from the training program.

6. Reconsideration, Review and Appeal of College decisions

Following notification of the outcome made pursuant to this policy, applicants may request a Reconsideration of a decision under the College's established Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Procedures, which may be accessed via the College website.

7. Related RANZCOG documents

- RANZCOG Regulations
- Trainee in Difficulty Policy
- Guideline for managing complaints against RANZCOG members
- Code of Conduct

Version	Date of Version	Pages revised / Brief Explanation of Revision
Version 1	November 2022	Creation of a new policy extracted from relevant Regulation

Policy Version:	Version 1
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Policy Approved by:	RANZCOG Board
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