Policy on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Prevention

Introduction

Star Academy is committed to the principles of academic integrity and intellectual honesty. This document outlines the core principles for our school community, addressing serious issues like cheating and plagiarism.

At the core of academic integrity is the expectation that students present work that is truly their own and appropriately acknowledge the contributions of others. This principle is vital for learning, knowledge advancement, respect for fellow scholars, and our institution's reputation.

Cheating involves any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in assessments, including unauthorized collaboration on assignments, using prohibited materials and devices during exams, submitting work not originally the student's, and facilitating academic dishonesty by any other means. Such actions compromise the educational process and devalue legitimate student achievements.

Plagiarism is defined as presenting another's work or ideas as your own without proper acknowledgment. It undermines our school's academic values, discredits original authors, and unfairly benefits the plagiarizer.

Artificial intelligence (AI) offers many opportunities for enhancing learning and research but also presents challenges in maintaining academic integrity. Therefore, this policy also addresses the acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI in academic work.

Our aim is to nurture an environment that values originality, critical thinking, and ethical scholarship. By following this policy, students reinforce a culture of integrity and maintain Star Academy's academic standards.

Policy Statement

Star Academy is committed to academic integrity and considers it fundamental to our educational mission. We maintain a zero-tolerance approach towards academic dishonesty in any form. This policy applies to all students, faculty, and staff, ensuring a fair and consistent approach to the preservation of academic integrity.

Our commitment extends to:

1. **Educating and Supporting Students**: We believe in proactively educating students about the meaning of academic integrity and academic dishonesty, the

importance of demonstrating one's own efforts, and the value of original work. This includes providing resources and support to develop skills necessary for academic success, including proper citation skills.

2. **Promoting Ethical Use of Technology**: We emphasize the ethical use of technology in general and AI specifically. Students are encouraged to use digital tools as an aid for learning, not as a means to circumvent the process of original, critical thinking.

3. **Ensuring Fairness and Transparency**: All cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be handled with due process, ensuring fairness and transparency. This includes clear procedures for investigation and the opportunity for students to respond to any allegations.

4. **Implementing Appropriate Consequences**: Violations of this policy will result in appropriate disciplinary actions in accordance with this policy and the Student Handbook.

5. **Continual Review and Adaptation**: This policy will be regularly reviewed and updated to remain effective and relevant.

Definition of Cheating

Cheating is the act of engaging in dishonest or unethical behavior to gain an academic advantage. It manifests in various forms, each undermining the integrity of the educational process. Recognizing and understanding these forms are essential for maintaining academic standards.

1. **Unauthorized Collaboration**: Working with others on assignments designed for individual completion.

2. **Exam Misconduct**: Using prohibited materials or devices during tests, or copying from others.

3. **Fabrication**: Inventing or falsifying data, research, or citations.

4. **Impersonation**: Having someone else complete work or take an exam on your behalf.

5. **Unauthorized Aid**: Using resources or help not allowed by the instructor.

It is important to understand that cheating is not confined to specific actions but includes any attempt to circumvent academic evaluation processes dishonestly.

Definition of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the act of using someone else's work, ideas, expressions, or intellectual property without proper attribution, implying it is your own original work. This may encompass a wide range of activities and can be intentional or unintentional. Understanding the various forms plagiarism can take is crucial for students and staff to avoid committing it. Key forms include, but are not limited to:

1. **Direct Plagiarism**: Copying text verbatim from a source without citation and quotation marks. This is the most blatant form of plagiarism.

2. **Paraphrasing Plagiarism**: Rephrasing or rewording another person's work without acknowledging its original source.

3. **Source-Based Plagiarism**: Misrepresenting the content or intent of your sources, including citing sources that were not used.

4. **Self-Plagiarism**: Submitting one's own previous work for a new assignment without permission or acknowledgement. This also includes reusing substantial parts of previously submitted work.

5. **Mosaic Plagiarism**: Piecing together texts from multiple sources to create a new whole, without proper acknowledgment.

6. **Accidental Plagiarism**: Failing to cite sources or paraphrase adequately due to negligence, misunderstanding, or unintentional oversight.

It is important to note that plagiarism is not limited to written text; it also includes ideas, data, software, art, language, and other forms of intellectual property.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Use of AI

Star Academy acknowledges the significant role AI plays in enhancing the learning experience. However, it is crucial to distinguish between its acceptable and unacceptable uses to uphold academic integrity.

Acceptable Use of AI:

1. **Educational Enhancement**: Utilizing AI tools for understanding complex concepts, simulations, and interactive learning.

2. **Research Assistance**: Employing AI for data analysis, gathering scholarly resources, or generating hypotheses for further exploration.

3. **Writing Assistance**: Using AI to suggest grammar corrections, improve language structure, or provide citation guidance.

4. **Creative Inspiration**: Leveraging AI for brainstorming or initial idea generation in creative projects.

Unacceptable Use of AI:

1. **Assignment Completion**: Directly using AI-generated content as part or all of a student's assignment without proper modification or attribution.

2. **Test Taking**: Employing AI tools during exams or quizzes in place of a student's own knowledge and problem-solving abilities.

3. **Fabrication of Data**: Utilizing AI to create or alter data for research purposes without disclosure or for deceptive reasons.

4. **Impersonation**: Using AI to mimic a student's personal writing style or voice in assignments.

It is essential for students to understand that AI should serve as a tool to augment learning, not replace it. The focus should be on the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and independent thought. While AI can provide assistance, the core ideas and substantial content of academic work must originate from the student.

Violations of these guidelines will be considered a breach of academic integrity and will be subject to the same disciplinary actions as plagiarism. Students are encouraged to seek clarification from instructors if unsure about the appropriate use of AI in their academic work.

Procedures for Handling Academic Dishonesty

Star Academy has established a clear and systematic procedure for handling cases of academic dishonesty to ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency. These procedures are an integral part of our commitment to uphold academic integrity.

1. **Review for Potential Academic Dishonesty**: The teacher's assessment of student work will include a review for potential breaches of academic integrity (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, etc.). The teacher may conduct such review using various available means, including but not limited to Turnitin, a specialized system integrated into the school's Learning Management System (LMS), and comparison to prior student assessment results, etc.

2. **Informal Discussion**: If academic dishonesty is suspected, the teacher will discuss the matter informally with the student to understand their perspective. Such a discussion may include spot-checking test answers, a request to re-take a test, discussion of the origins and content of the student's work, etc.

3. **Notification of Academic Dishonesty**: Based on the student discussion, should the teacher determine that a breach of academic integrity has occurred, the teacher notifies the student of the finding.

4. **Opportunity for Student Response**: The student is given a chance to explain or respond to the concern, ensuring that their viewpoint and any extenuating circumstances are considered.

5. **Record of Infraction**: Based on the teacher's assessment of the situation and the student's response, the teacher records the breach of academic integrity as conduct violation in the school LMS. Thus, the student's parents or guardians will be notified to ensure transparency and family involvement in understanding the teacher's concern.

6. **Appeal**: The student is given the opportunity to appeal the finding. See *Appeal Process* for additional information.

7. **Educational Response**: The school administration considers the findings by the teacher and any appeal information and determines an appropriate educational response. See *Consequences of Academic Dishonesty* for additional information.

8. **Record Keeping**: Throughout the process, a record of the incident is maintained, focusing on the learning outcome rather than punitive action.

9. **Confidentiality**: The process is conducted with confidentiality to maintain the student's privacy.

10. **Ongoing Support**: Continuous support and resources are provided to the student to prevent future incidents of academic dishonesty and foster a better understanding of academic integrity.

Consequences of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is not only a breach of our academic standards but also a hindrance to genuine learning and intellectual development. Therefore, clear consequences for academic dishonesty serve both as a deterrent and as a means of educating students about the importance of academic honesty.

1. **First Offense** - Education and Correction:
    - For a first incident of academic dishonesty, the primary response is educational. The student may be required to redo the assignment with guidance on proper citation and research practices.
    - A meeting with a teacher or academic advisor may be scheduled to discuss the importance of academic integrity.
    - Parents or guardians will be informed to ensure that the student receives support and understands the importance of academic integrity.

2. **Second Offense** - Increased Consequences:
    - If a second incident occurs, the consequences become more significant. This might include a reduction in the grade for the assignment.
    - A formal warning will be issued, and a mandatory educational session on academic integrity must be attended by the student.
    - Continued parental involvement and possibly a meeting with the school counselor or principal.

3. **Repeated Offenses** - Formal Disciplinary Action:
    - Repeated instances of academic dishonesty may lead to more severe disciplinary actions such as a failing grade for the course, suspension, or other penalties appropriate to the student's grade level and in accordance with school policies.
    - A formal record of the incidents will be maintained, which could impact the student's overall academic record.

4. **Consideration of Circumstances**:
    - While maintaining a firm stance against academic dishonesty, individual circumstances will be considered in determining appropriate consequences. Factors such as the student's age, intent, and understanding of the rules will be taken into account.

The primary goal of these consequences is to educate students on the value of originality and integrity in their academic pursuits and prepare them for the next stages in their education.

Appeal Process

Star Academy believes in providing a fair and just approach to handling academic integrity issues. Therefore, we have established an appeal process that allows students to contest a finding of academic dishonesty if they believe it to be unjust or erroneous. This process ensures that every student has the opportunity to be heard and that all cases are handled with due consideration.

1. **Right to Appeal**:
   - Students have the right to appeal any decision related to a finding of academic dishonesty. This appeal must be made to the Academic Advisor.

2. **Procedure for Filing an Appeal**:
   - The student must submit a written appeal, clearly stating the grounds for the appeal. This should include any relevant information or evidence that the student believes was not considered in the initial decision.
   - The written appeal should be addressed to the Academic Advisor.

3. **Review Process**:
   - Upon receiving an appeal, the Academic Advisor will review all pertinent information, including the original report of academic dishonesty, the student's submission, and any additional evidence provided in the appeal.
   - The Advisor may consult with the teacher involved, other academic staff, as appropriate.

4. **Outcome of the Appeal**:
   - The student will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal. The decision made at this stage is considered final.
   - If the appeal is upheld, appropriate adjustments will be made, which may include revising the student's grade and/or removing the record of academic dishonesty.

5. **Confidentiality and Impartiality**:
   - Throughout the appeal process, confidentiality will be maintained to protect the privacy of all parties involved.
   - The review will be conducted impartially, ensuring that the student receives a fair and unbiased hearing.

Adoption and amendments

This policy is effective for the 2023/2024 school year and thereafter. This policy may be amended by unanimous decision of the school owners.