1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to uphold academic integrity and the authenticity of assessment evidence by defining what constitutes plagiarism and outlining the consequences of engaging in plagiarism.

2. Definitions

Plagiarism -Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting as one's own original work the ideas, interpretations, words or creative works of another. These include published and unpublished documents, designs, music, sounds, images, photographs, computer codes and ideas gained through working in a group. These ideas, interpretations, words or works may be found in print and/or electronic media. Plagiarism includes:

- Copying text directly from sources without quotation marks and citation.
- Paraphrasing someone else's ideas without proper acknowledgment.
- Submitting someone else's work as one's own.

Academic Misconduct - Any form of dishonest behaviour in academic work, including plagiarism, collusion, and cheating.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) - Systems or tools capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as problem-solving, decision-making, natural language processing, or learning from data.

AI Misuse: Unethical or inappropriate use of AI tools, including cheating, plagiarism, or generating misleading information.

3. Policy statement

VACTS is committed to ensuring a great learning experience for our students. We aim to provide a learning environment that fosters the qualities of independent learning and academic integrity.

This policy seeks to encourage ethical conduct and to inform staff and students about our standards of academic behaviour. Students have a responsibility to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity in their work. Students must not cheat in assessment and must ensure that they do not plagiarise the work of others or from AI sources.

3.1 Academic integrity requirements

One of our core functions is to develop the student's ability to apply critical reasoning to assessment activities through independent thought and to make decisions that reflect the student's considerations of the task or workplace requirement.

We acknowledge that to develop this ability, the student will study the work of others via issued textbooks, learning material or through their own research. However, it is important that students acknowledge through appropriate referencing in their assessments, earlier work from which they have drawn information.

It is compulsory for students to acknowledge and/or provide appropriate referencing when using the work of others. Failure to comply with this requirement will constitute a breach of academic integrity.

The rules of evidence of assessment also require that the work which trainers are basing their assessment decisions is the authentic work of the student. Content drawn from AI sources presents a significant risk to the integrity of assessment as students will obtain work through using prompts in AI platforms rather that develop this work themselves. Acknowledging this, the growth in the use of AI in all aspects of society is undeniable. VACTS has needed to find the right balance between strictly prohibiting the use of AI and allowing the student to use AI like any other tool at their disposal (where it is appropriate to do so) to enhance the work they produce in work and study.

Where permitted in the assessment instructions, it is compulsory for students to acknowledge and/or provide appropriate referencing for any work generated by AI including where the student is paraphrasing, quoting, or summarising this material.

Where permitted in the assessment instructions, it is compulsory for students to acknowledge where work has been edited, rewritten, or translated by AI by providing an acknowledgement and details of this as part of their assessment submission. This acknowledgement can be included in

the *Assessment Authenticity Declaration*.

Where the assessment instructions expressly do not allow the use of AI or where there is no clear permission to do so, students are not permitted to use AI to respond to assessment tasks. All assessment work will be reviewed for AI content and failure to comply with this requirement will constitute a breach of academic integrity.

3.2 Referencing

Referencing demonstrates that the student has read the issued material or has undertaken their own research using other sources. Failure to reference appropriately is considered unethical academic behaviour and will result in a student's work not being accepted.

Students should understand that assignment and project work submitted for assessment must consist of original effort. It is insufficient to simply copy work from other sources and submit it, even if those sources are appropriately acknowledged. Work submitted by a student must have an original component.

The following are examples of plagiarism where a student intentionally does not acknowledge or reference an author or source:

- Direct copying of paragraphs, sentences, a single sentence or significant parts of a sentence;
- Direct copying of paragraphs, sentences, a single sentence or significant parts of a sentence with an end reference but without quotation marks around the copied text;
- Copying ideas, concepts, research results, computer codes, statistical tables, designs, images, sounds or text or any combination of these;
- Paraphrasing, summarising or simply rearranging another person's words, ideas, etc., without reference or explanation;
- Offering an idea or interpretation that is not one's own without identifying whose idea or interpretation it is;
- A 'cut and paste' of statements from multiple sources;
- Presenting as independent, work done in collaboration with others;
- Copying or adapting another student's original work into a submitted assessment item;
- Copying or adapting a student's own work submitted in a previous essay or assessment; or
- Unintentionally failing to cite sources or to do so adequately.

Careless or inadequate referencing or failure to reference will be considered poor practice. Where careless referencing is identified, the student will be required to correct the error and resubmit an assessment.

3.3 How to reference

Students are encouraged to apply the Harvard Referencing System in-text citation. This approach requires three pieces of information about a source within the text of the students work. This information is:

- the name of the author or authors
- the year of publication
- the page number

Examples

Citations may be placed at the end of a sentence (before the concluding punctuation) in brackets, e.g.:

- To succeed, the team will rely on both task process and group process (Dwyer, Hopwood 2010, p. 239)

A reference may also be placed in the text to integrate the author's surname into the sentence, followed by the year of publication and page number, in brackets, e.g.:

- Dwyer and Hopwood (2010, p. 239) identify that to succeed, the team will rely on both task process and group process.

3.4 Reference List

At the end of the students' work, a List of References must be included. This should include all the books, journal articles and other sources of information you have used to research your assignment. The reference list should be laid out alphabetically and the title of the source should be italicised. Each reference must include:

- the name of the author or authors
- the year of publication
- the title of the publication
- the edition of publication

- the publisher
- place of publication

Example

- Dwyer, J and Hopwood, N, 2010, *Management Strategies and Skills*, Sydney, McGraw Hill Australia

3.5 Common Knowledge

In every field, there is a body of knowledge and material that has become part of the public domain, and which can be drawn on without specific acknowledgment. Common knowledge includes facts that are generally known, such as common facts of history, common sense information, accepted folklore and aphorisms that have been adopted as part of common English language.

As examples, it would not be necessary to reference the following:

- That Julia Gillard was the Prime Minister of Australia (common fact of history)
- That humans need food and water for survival (common sense observation)
- That the "Bunyip" is a man-eating Australian animals that live in water-holes, swamps and creeks(accepted folklore)

3.6 Cheating

Cheating is defined as "a form of deceit with a view to gaining an advantage for the cheat." Cheating is usually related to taking unauthorised material into assessments. Trainers have a responsibility to explain clearly the expectations related to any assessment, what constitutes cheating, and to promote a climate of honesty in students.

3.7 AI-Generated Content in Student Submissions

AI-based platforms, such as ChatGPT, are capable of producing detailed and coherent content on a wide array of topics. They pose challenges in ensuring academic integrity. Students might be tempted to use AI-generated content for assessments, mistakenly believing this is a shortcut to achieving their academic goals. In some assessments, student may be permitted to use AI generated content and this will be expressly notified to the student in the assessment instructions. In these circumstances, students will be required to acknowledge and reference this work like any other information source. Where this permission has not been expressly provided, the use of AI sources and tools to prepare assessment submissions is prohibited.

Trainers must remain alert to the distinctive nuances of AI-produced responses, which often lack the personal touch, individual perspective, and unique voice of a student. The uncritical use or heavy reliance on such AI-generated material without proper attribution in assignments is considered a constitute a breach of academic integrity.

Acceptable uses

Acceptable uses of AI software where no permission is required:

- **Assisting students to understand complex concepts by explaining them in simpler terms**: AI can serve as a supplementary learning tool by breaking down difficult concepts into more digestible explanations. For example, a student struggling could ask an AI to explain a process using simpler language. The AI's explanation would complement, not replace, course materials and lectures, helping students grasp foundational concepts before engaging with more technical sources. Boundaries and limitations for this use case include the following:

  Boundaries:

  - AI should be used to clarify understanding, not to replace learning
  - Students must still engage directly with course materials and lectures
  - AI explanations should be verified against course content
  - Students should not use AI during exams or assessments

  Limitations:

  - AI may provide oversimplified explanations that miss important nuances
  - Subject-specific terminology and concepts should still be learned properly
  - AI should not be the sole source of understanding

- **Researching a subject to understand better**: AI can be used as an initial research assistant to provide background information and context on unfamiliar topics. Students might use AI to generate explanations of basic concepts, identify key themes, or understand the historical context of their subject matter. This preliminary research provides a foundation for deeper engagement with course materials. The AI's input should serve as a starting point for further investigation, not as a primary source. Boundaries and limitations for this use case include the following:

Boundaries:

- AI should only be used for initial exploration and background understanding
- All facts and information must be verified through reliable sources
- AI cannot be cited as a reference in assessment work unless permitted

Limitations:

- AI knowledge may be outdated or incomplete
- Sources suggested by AI must be independently verified
- Primary research and issued learning material should be the main research tools

– **Assisting with creative thinking and brainstorming ideas**: AI can function as a brainstorming partner to help generate initial ideas and explore different perspectives on a topic. Students might use AI to suggest potential assignment ideas, research questions, or project approaches. For instance, when developing a research topic, students could engage with AI to explore various aspects of their subject and identify interesting concepts to investigate. The final selection and development of ideas should reflect the student's own critical thinking and judgment. Boundaries and limitations for this use case include the following:

Boundaries:

- AI suggestions should be starting points, not final solutions
- Students must develop and refine ideas independently
- Final work must reflect original thinking
- Attribution needed if using specific AI-generated suggestions, where permitted

Limitations:

- AI suggestions might be generic or lack depth
- Ideas need to be developed through critical thinking
- AI is not suitable for generating complete project plans or solutions
- AI does not know the context of the assessment

- **Explaining phrases or figures of speech that students are unfamiliar with**: AI can help clarify unfamiliar language that students encounter in their course work. This is particularly valuable for students from a non-English speaking background or when working with older texts. For example, a construction student might use AI to understand phrases like 'toolbox talk' or 'fit for purpose,' while a hospitality student might seek clarification on terms like 'mise en place' or 'front of house.' The AI serves as a quick reference tool, similar to a dictionary or industry guide, helping students better comprehend both their learning materials and workplace communications. This support is especially useful when reading standard operating procedures, workplace health and safety documents, or technical manuals where understanding specific terminology is crucial for both learning and workplace safety. Boundaries and limitations for this use case include the following:

  Boundaries:

  - AI should supplement, not replace, learning material and resources
  - Contextual understanding should still be developed
  - Explanations should be verified against reliable sources

  Limitations:

  - AI may miss specific assessment contexts
  - Should not be used as the sole reference for technical terminology
  - May oversimplify complex or technical concepts

- **Analysing information to identify trends and patterns**: AI can assist in processing and analysing large amounts of data or text to identify underlying patterns, trends, or themes. Students might use AI to help analyse survey responses, identify recurring themes in literature, or spot patterns in research information. However, the interpretation and significance of these patterns should be determined through the student's own critical analysis and understanding. AI serves as an analytical tool, while the intellectual work of drawing meaningful conclusions remains with the student. Boundaries and limitations for this use case include the following:

  Boundaries:

  - Raw data analysis only; interpretation must be student's own work
  - Statistical methods must follow the assessment requirements
  - Results must be overly critically evaluated

Limitations:

- AI may miss contextual factors in the assessment
- Cannot human reasoning and understanding
- Should not be sole basis for research conclusions

– **Improving written communication**: AI can be used as a writing assistant to help students enhance their communication skills. This might include suggesting ways to clarify arguments, improve sentence structure, or ensure consistency in the assessment response. For example, students might use AI to receive feedback on the clarity of their explanations or the logical flow of their arguments. However, the content, ideas, and final expression must be the student's own work. AI should be used to refine and improve communication of the student's original thoughts, not to generate written content. Boundaries and limitations for this use case include the following:

  Boundaries:

  - AI should only suggest improvements, not rewrite content
  - Original ideas and arguments must be student's own
  - Final writing must maintain student's authentic voice
  - No AI-generated content in final submissions

  Limitations:

  - Should not be used for wholesale editing or rewriting
  - Grammar and style suggestions need human review
  - Cannot replace the development of writing skills

Unacceptable uses

If a student uses AI sources to generate material for assessment that they represent as their own ideas, research and/or analysis, they are NOT submitting their own work. The following examples are scenarios which are considered unacceptable use of AI:

- **Direct Generation of Assessment Responses**. Using AI to generate complete or partial answers for assessments, such as:
  - Having AI write workplace documentation like risk assessments or incident reports

  - Using AI to complete practical task descriptions or work procedures
  - Submitting AI-generated responses for knowledge questions
  - Using AI to create workplace portfolios or evidence collections
- **Bypassing Skill Development**. Using AI in ways that prevent learning essential vocational skills such as:
  - Having AI solve workplace calculations instead of developing mathematical competency
  - Using AI to create technical drawings or designs without learning the underlying principles
  - Relying on AI for measurements or specifications instead of developing measurement skills
  - Having AI interpret technical manuals or workplace documents without developing comprehension skills
- **Professional Communication Tasks**. Using AI to complete communication tasks that demonstrate professional competency, such as:
  - Having AI write client communications or workplace emails
  - Using AI to generate workplace reports
  - Submitting AI-generated meeting minutes or briefing notes
  - Using AI to create workplace presentations or training materials
- **Evidence Collection**. Using AI to fabricate or manipulate evidence of competency, such as:
  - Creating artificial workplace scenarios or examples
  - Generating fictional workplace experiences or observations
  - Producing simulated workplace documentation
  - Creating artificial supervisor feedback or third-party reports
- **Practical Skills Documentation**. Using AI to document practical skills without actually performing them, such as:
  - Writing up practical task procedures without completing them
  - Generating safety check documentation without performing checks

- Creating maintenance logs without conducting maintenance
- Documenting customer service interactions that didn't occur

- **Group Work and Collaboration**. Using AI to bypass genuine workplace collaboration:
  - Having AI generate team contributions
  - Using AI to complete assigned portions of group tasks
  - Creating artificial peer feedback or evaluations
  - Generating team meeting outcomes without participation

Detection of AI use

Signs to look out for

When marking assessments, trainers are responsible for detecting suspected use of generative AI. Signs to look out for include:

- Sophisticated language that does not match the students 'previous writing or verbal language skills (i.e. compare and contrast)
- Lengthy responses that do not reflect the learning material
- Responses that have abrupt topic shifts or irrelevant inclusions
- Unusual patterns of language use, i.e. a more mechanical sentence structure and more frequent use of some words than is normal
- Lack of critical thinking, personal perspective or original ideas
- Inconsistent writing style
- Responses that do not consider the context of the assessment
- Generalist tone and content that lacks personal experiences, opinions, or biases
- Perfect grammar with odd phrasings that sound slightly off or overly formal
- Miss-spelling of words consistent with the English language such as "Analyze"

Trainers may also use AI detection software to help determine inappropriate AI use. The following are some tools that are freely available:

- https://decopy.ai/
- https://www.scribbr.com/ai-detector/
- https://gptzero.me/

The trainer must review the work submitted to identify the unacceptable use of AI sourced content to ensure the assessment evidence is authentic and the student has not breach academic integrity.

Student responsibilities

Students are responsible for:

- Submitting only work that is their own or that properly acknowledges the ideas, interpretations, words or creative works of others;
- Avoiding lending original work to others for any reason;
- Being clear about assessment conditions and seeking clarification if in doubt;
- Being clear about what is appropriate referencing and the consequences of inappropriate referencing;
- Only use AI tool according to the acceptable use guidelines.
- Discouraging others from plagiarising by observing the practices above.

4. Considerations

None.

5. Procedure

Steps		Person/s responsible
Plagiarism		
i.	**Educate students about plagiarism.** Students are informed about our policies and procedures in relation to plagiarism in the following ways: • Our policy and procedure on plagiarism is provided to students in the Student Handbook. • Information on plagiarism is provided at the front of each assessment book. • Trainers and Trainers are responsible for: – Informing all students of expectations related to assessment; – Informing all students of referencing techniques and providing clear examples of what is acceptable; – Explaining to students what constitutes plagiarism; – Setting realistic assessment activities and varying assignments and questions; – Assisting students to understand and apply correct referencing techniques; – Setting appropriate conditions for group activities and make clear the distinction between group work and individual work; and – Cultivating a climate of mutual respect for original work.	Trainers and Trainers
ii.	**Identify suspected plagiarism.** Trainers should review assessments for signs of inconsistent writing styles or other indications of plagiarism including the unacceptable use of AI.	Trainers
iii.	**Report suspected plagiarism.** If plagiarism is suspected, the trainer should document the evidence and discuss the issue with the student.	Trainer, Training Manager

	If plagiarism is confirmed, the trainer should submit a formal report to the Training Manager.	
iv.	**Undertake investigation.** The Training Manager in consultation with the trainer will review the evidence and consider any explanations provided by the student. This preliminary step may involve an informal interview with the student. The Training Manager or Chief Executive Officer and trainer will: – consider the extent of the plagiarism (noting that the more extensive the plagiarism, the more likely it was intentional); – review the course information and other information provided to students by the Trainer to determine if adequate information had been given; – identify if the student has been previously warned of plagiarism; – determine whether the student is new to adult vocational education and training (it would be expected that continuing students would be more likely to understand plagiarism and its consequences); – determine whether plagiarism has occurred and whether it is the result of poor academic practice or was intentional.	Training Manager, Trainer
v.	**Notify student of the result of the investigation.** The student will be notified in writing of the result of the investigation and the remedial action required, if any. The following remedial action will be taken in the following circumstances: • *Plagiarism resulting from poor academic practice*- If it has been determined that the plagiarism has arisen from poor academic practice; the student is to be requested to revise the work and submit it for reassessment. • *Intentional plagiarism*–If it is determined that the plagiarism was intentional, the student's work is not to be accepted, and the student is to be issued with an alternative assessment to complete. The student is to be given a formal warning in	Training Manager

	writing (Warning Letter for Academic Misconduct) by the Chief Executive Officer explaining the seriousness of the incident and the consequences if the student is found to plagiarise again (i.e. withdrawal from the course). Students who are found to continue to plagiarise work in support of their assessment will have their enrolment closed. Where a student has been found plagiarising to a level which is considered to be deliberate and egregious, the student's enrolment will be closed following being notified of the decision. The student will have the right to appeal any decision that they are notified of in accordance with the appeals policy.	
vi.	**Appeal.** Students have the right to appeal decisions related to plagiarism. Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive Officer, who will review the case and make a final decision.	CEO
vii.	**Record evidence and results of investigation.** Records of the initial assessment responses, any interviews held with the student and the results of the investigation are to be saved in the students file and recorded in the student management system.	Training Manager
viii.	**Students who re-offend.** Students who commit plagiarism after being formally warned are to be withdrawn from the training program and issued with a refund of their fees less all expenses incurred by the RTO up to the point of their withdrawal.	Trainer, Training Manager
ix.	**Consider Opportunities for Improvement.** At the conclusion of responding to an incident of plagiarism, the Training Manager together with the CEO is to consider any opportunities for improvement for how the instance of plagiarism could be prevented from further occurrence. Identified opportunities for improvement should be recorded onto a continuous improvement report to be considered at the next management meeting.	Training Manager and CEO

6. Related documents/forms

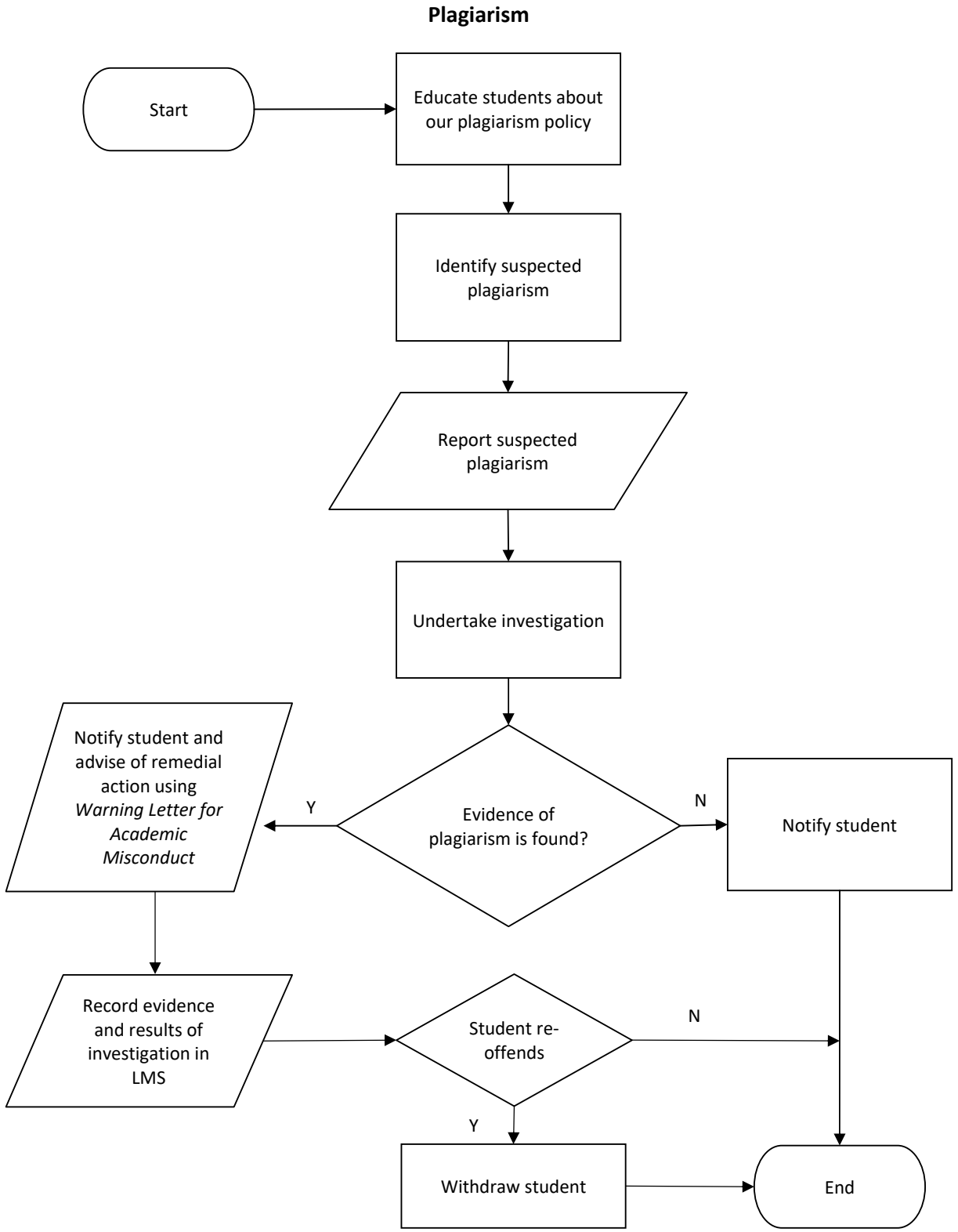
Forms

- Warning Letter
- Continuous Improvement Report
- Complaint or Appeals Form
- Complaints and Appeals Register

Handbooks, manuals or other documents

- Student Handbook

7. Flow chart


Plagiarism
Start
Educate students about our plagiarism policy
Identify suspected plagiarism
Report suspected plagiarism
Undertake investigation
Evidence of plagiarism is found?
Y
Notify student and advise of remedial action using *Warning Letter for Academic Misconduct*
N
Notify student
Record evidence and results of investigation in LMS
Student re-offends
N
Y
Withdraw student
End

8. Reference(s)

2025 Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) :

Outcome Standards for NVR RTOs, Standard 1.4: The assessment system ensures assessment is conducted in a way that is fair and appropriate and enables accurate assessment judgements of VET student competency.

ESOS Act 2000 - National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018,

- **Standard 6 Overseas student support services:** This standard sets out that registered providers must assist overseas students to adjust to study and life in Australia and have appropriate orientation programs that help overseas students to access the information and services they require.
- **Standard 10 Complaints and appeals:** This standard sets out that registered providers must ensure their overseas students have the right to natural justice protected through access to professional, timely, inexpensive and documented complaints handling and appeals processes.