

MASTERSTART INSTITUTE (PTY) LTD

Private Higher Education Institution

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

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1. Introduction

This Code of Conduct reflects the core values of Masterstart Institute (Pty) Ltd. (hereafter referred to as MSI). MSI is committed to educational excellence, enhancing and further innovating the learner-centric approach to education that places our students at the centre of the learning process. We champion a collaborative learning process supported by a highly interactive virtual learning environment, aiming to provide a distinctive, humanised learning experience. This Code of Conduct aims to promote quality teaching and learning that embraces the potential of all students by enforcing best practices and a conducive learning environment that ensures all students have equal learning opportunities and can reach their full potential.

2. Purpose

MSI's Learner Code of Conduct Policy establishes and outlines the expected student conduct and behaviour, examples of misconduct, and how misconduct is managed in an online/ digital learning environment. MSI Institute expects that all students act as responsible digital citizens and members of their learning community and conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates a high level of personal integrity with respect for the law and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Each student is required to know and adhere to the principles outlined in the Learner Code of Conduct. Students have access to the Code of Conduct on the Online Campus (OC) and are responsible for reading all policies and procedures affecting them.

Students registered for a programme or course are automatically subject to MSI's disciplinary process.

3. Organisational Scope

This policy is relevant to all students registered and enrolled in MSI programmes and courses. The Code applies to students' conduct wherever they are engaged in activities and services as MSI students or in whichever capacity they are identified as MSI students.

The Code of Conduct applies to all academic and community engagement activities, including, but not limited to, the use of all online platforms such as the OC or IT infrastructure, social media, all communications, attendance at Collaborative Learning sessions, submission and writing of assignments, essays, reports, or other assessments, and any other interaction with fellow students.

The Code of Conduct is not stand-alone, and students must read and comply with all other general, academic, financial, and administrative policies and regulations.

4. Statement/ Application

MSI is committed to providing a learning environment that ensures the safety, welfare, and accessibility of its students and staff by upholding the institute's values and mission. All students are expected to treat other students and staff with courtesy and respect regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, social background,

disability, sexual preference, or religious beliefs and customs and to act in an acceptable way.

This Code of Conduct must be read in conjunction with the following Policies and documents:

- The Terms and Conditions outlined in the registration and enrolment form
- MSI Prospectus
- Student support Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Plagiarism Policy
- Language Policy
- Assessment Policy
- RPL and CAT Policies
- Certification Policy

5. Glossary

- 5.1 Code of Conduct:** The set of rules, regulations, and policies of MSI that outline the expected behaviour of all MSI students.
- 5.2 Ethical behaviour:** Ethical behaviour is characterised by honesty, fairness, and equity in interpersonal, professional, and academic relationships and academic activities. It respects the dignity, diversity, and rights of individuals and groups of people.
- 5.3 Misconduct:** Any unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour of any person linked to MSI that infringes on the code of conduct.
- 5.4 Disciplinary process:** The proceedings that must be followed when disciplining a student for both serious or minor offences as outlined in the Code of Conduct and other institutional policies and processes.

6. Code of Conduct Principles

The following principles and types of misconduct that are presented in this policy are intended to be all-inclusive and avoid inappropriate behaviour that can occur in a learning environment.

- The Disciplinary Committee has the responsibility to address student misconduct and recommends suitable types of disciplinary action that is required to be taken.
- MSI encourages academics and support staff to try to address and resolve areas of misconduct before it is escalated to the disciplinary committee.
- MSI endeavours to deal with all types of misconduct and disciplinary action in a fair and consistent manner.
- Students are expected to read and understand all regulations, rules, and policies, and ignorance will not be accepted as an excuse for any transgression or as a basis for an exception to any of these policies and regulations.

- MSI recognises that misconduct is difficult under any circumstance and will provide guidance and support where appropriate.
- All MSI students are required to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner when engaging with any and all MSI staff and peers.

We expect all students and staff associated with MSI to adhere to two most important code of conduct principles:

Integrity

- **Core Principle:** Integrity involves honesty and ethical behaviour in all actions, whether academic, professional, or personal. This includes avoiding cheating, plagiarism, and fraud, being truthful in communications, and taking responsibility for one's actions.
- **Why It's Important:** Integrity builds trust within the community, ensuring that academic achievements, evaluations, and collaborations are genuine. It is foundational to credibility and respect, which are essential for both personal and institutional success.

Respect

- **Core Principle:** Respect involves treating others with dignity, fairness, and consideration. This encompasses respecting the rights, opinions, and privacy of others, engaging in civil communication, and avoiding any form of discrimination, harassment, or bullying.
- **Why It's Important:** Respect fosters a positive and inclusive environment where individuals can feel safe, valued, and encouraged to participate. It is crucial for maintaining a healthy, supportive community that promotes both learning and collaboration.

These two principles are the cornerstones of a functional, ethical, and supportive community, within MSI's academic setting.

7. Categories of Misconduct

In our MSI Distance (with online support) mode of delivery context, categories of student misconduct reflect the unique challenges of online education. These categories of misconduct include:

7.1 Academic Misconduct

- **Cheating:** Using unauthorised materials during online examination or assessments (e.g., sharing answers via chat, using unauthorised notes, or paying others to complete work).
- **Plagiarism:** Submitting work that is not the student's own or failing to properly cite sources in written assignments or discussion posts.
- **Fabrication:** Falsifying data or information in academic submissions, research, or other coursework.

- **Unauthorized Collaboration:** Working with others on assignments or examinations meant to be completed individually.

7.2 Integrity in Online Assessments

- **Impersonation:** Having someone else take an online exam or assessment on the student's behalf.
- **Unauthorized Use of Technology:** Using tools or websites that are not permitted during exams or assignments (e.g., using search engines or group chats to obtain answers).

7.3 Behavioural Misconduct in Virtual Settings

- **Disruption of Virtual Classrooms:** Engaging in disruptive behaviour during virtual classes or forums (e.g., inappropriate comments, off-topic discussions, or intentionally causing technical disruptions).
- **Disrespectful Communication:** Using offensive, inappropriate, or threatening language in emails, discussion boards, video chats, or messaging platforms.

7.4 Technology and Network Misuse

- **Hacking or Unauthorised Access:** Attempting to gain unauthorised access to university systems, course materials, or another student's account.
- **Misuse of University Platforms:** Using learning management systems (LMS), for purposes not related to education or in violation of the institution's policy.
- **Inappropriate Use of Social Media:** Posting inappropriate content related to MSI, academics, or peers on social media platforms.

7.5 Privacy Violations

- **Recording Without Permission:** Recording online classes, discussions, or meetings without explicit permission from an academic or other participants.
- **Sharing Confidential Information:** Sharing login credentials, course materials, or other sensitive information without authorisation.

7.6. Harassment, Bullying, and Discrimination

- **Cyberbullying:** Engaging in abusive behaviour towards peers or academics online, including threats, harassment, or persistent unwanted communication.
- **Discrimination:** Engaging in discriminatory behaviour based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, etc., in any form of online communication or coursework.
- **Harassment:** Sending offensive or unwanted communications via email, discussion boards, or messaging platforms.

7.7 Misrepresentation and Fraud

- **False Information:** Providing false information during admissions, programme registration, or in connection with academic work (e.g., false medical documents to get extensions).
- **Fraudulent Academic Claims:** Falsely claiming academic achievements or altering grades, transcripts, or certificates.

7.8 Non-Academic Misconduct

- **Disregard for Online Etiquette:** Failure to observe basic online etiquette, such as muting microphones when not speaking, maintaining respectful engagement, and dressing appropriately during video conferences.
- **Unprofessional Conduct:** Displaying unprofessional behaviour or attitudes that negatively affect the online learning environment, such as inappropriate attire or backgrounds during video calls.

7.9 Intellectual Property Violations

- **Sharing Course Materials:** Unauthorised sharing, distributing, or posting of course materials, lecture recordings, or proprietary content on third-party websites without MSI's permission.
- **Piracy:** Downloading or distributing copyrighted materials (e.g., textbooks, software) in violation of copyright laws.

7.10 Attendance and Participation Violations

- **Inadequate Participation:** Failing to meet minimum engagement standards for online discussions, group work, or required virtual attendance without valid reasons.
- **Multiple Accounts:** Creating multiple accounts to appear as if engaging more in coursework or to bypass restrictions.

7.11 Misuse of Online Resources

- **Inappropriate Use of Online Tools:** Using MSI's online platforms or tools (e.g., Teams, forums, email) for personal gain, spamming, or promoting illegal or unethical activities.
- **Disruption of Online Services:** Intentionally disrupting or sabotaging online learning platforms, such as overloading servers, creating fake links, or crashing virtual meetings.

7.12 Endangering Community Safety (Online and Offline)

- **Threats or Harmful Behaviour:** Making threats or engaging in behaviour that compromises the safety of the online learning environment or campus community, even in an online context.
- **Misleading Posts or Information:** Sharing false or misleading information that could harm others or the institution's reputation.

These categories emphasise the ethical use of technology, respectful online engagement, and the protection of intellectual property and privacy in MSI's learning context. Should students be in breach of any of these it will be seen as misconduct and disciplinary actions will follow.

8. Consequences of Misconduct

Behaving in a way that breaches the Student Code of Conduct can result in disciplinary action. Each matter will be treated individually, but behaviour that puts the institution or other students at risk may be criminal in nature and therefore may result in immediate exclusion from academic activities and even involving the authorities should this be applicable.

Students will be informed in writing of the misconduct which is in breach of the code of conduct or other issues outlined in the various policies. Students will then also be informed of a disciplinary hearing accordingly. Students may also follow the appeals process after a decision has been made by the Committee or other executive body. Disciplinary action, processes and procedures resulting from academic dishonesty and plagiarism is dealt with by the Assessment Committee.

9. Document Life Cycle

This document should be reviewed by the Academic Board every two years.