



WTC ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

JUNE 2022

WTC Academic Quality Assurance Policy

Purpose	To outline the processes in place to ensure a consistent and high standard of academic quality at WTC.
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Staff member responsible for update	Director of Undergraduate Studies
Policy / procedure relevant to	External - WTC website; MyWTC

1. Introduction

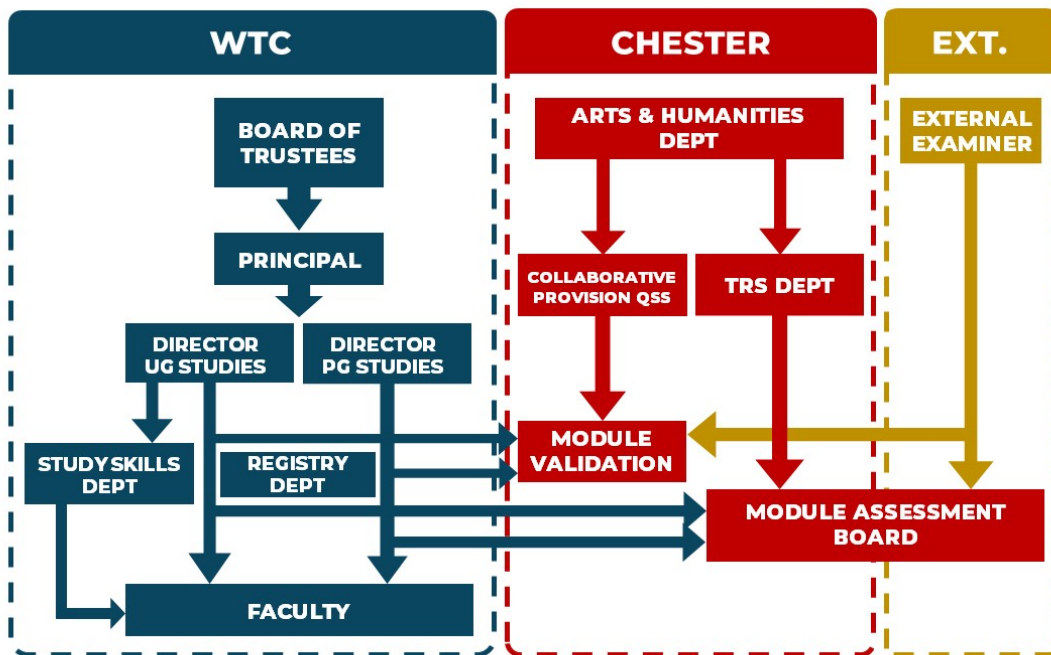
It is the policy of WTC Theology to create, deliver, and assess high quality academic programmes, incorporating the theological disciplines of Systematic Theology, Doctrine, Biblical Studies, Spiritual Formation, History of Spirituality and Religion, Missiology, Ethics and Ecclesiology. This policy document outlines the processes in place to ensure a consistent and high standard of academic quality throughout the curriculum development, delivery, and assessment of all academic programmes at WTC.

2. Academic Governance Framework

Within WTC, the Board of Trustees hold the Principal and Academic Team (Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS), Director of Postgraduate Studies (DPS) and the Study Skills Tutor) to account for the standard of content delivery. The DUS and DPS line-manage the faculty and oversee directly the development of all course material. The Academic Team is responsible for ensuring that a high standard of teaching and assessment is maintained across all programmes.

Externally, the University of Chester (UoC - WTC's validating partner) and an independent External Examiner hold the college to account for the quality of its curriculum development and its standards of assessment.

The following is an organigram of this framework:



3. Quality Assurance Processes

3.1. Curriculum and module development

- **TRS Benchmark Statement:** The curricula for all programmes have been designed in accordance with the QAA Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies.
- **Curriculum development:** The curriculum for all programmes, including the development of any new programmes, is decided by the Principal, in consultation with the DUS and DPS. These programmes are reviewed periodically as part of the college's ongoing commitment to improvement.
- **Module development:** Modules are developed by the appointed module lead, in consultation with the DUS, DPS and the Registry team. The DUS and DPS work closely with the module lead to ensure that an appropriate Module Descriptor is written, which meets the academic standards of WTC and the UoC, sets appropriate Course Aims and Learning Outcomes, and includes an engaging, relevant, and far-reaching syllabus. The DUS and DPS also work with the module lead to write academically appropriate assessments and to collate a suitable bibliography that will enable students of all levels to demonstrate their learning.
- **External Examiner:** Both the curriculum and all new modules (or amended modules) are reviewed and approved by an independent External Examiner (EE), who will work with the DUS, DPS and module lead to ensure that the standards of WTC and the UoC are met and maintained across all programmes.
- **Collaborative Provision:** Once a new and/or amended module has been approved by DUS/DPS and the EE, the Module Descriptor, Syllabus, Assessments, and Bibliography (the Core Documents) are submitted to the Collaborative Provision team in the Arts and Humanities department at the UoC for final approval. The Arts and Humanities Department confirms that the course material meets the quality and standards of the university and validates the module(s) for delivery from the following academic year.

3.2. Teaching and Learning

Ensuring a consistently high quality of teaching is paramount to the success of our programmes, and so the standard of teaching in the classroom is carefully monitored throughout the year.

- **Faculty Training:** WTC is committed to offering regular training for its faculty, and does so in a number of ways. New faculty will be inducted by either the DUS or DPS, depending on the module being taught, in line with WTC's **Faculty Induction Process** (see Appendix 1). New and existing faculty are also given access to video and written training resources (e.g.

How to teach online seminars; Teaching students with learning or physical difficulties; Marking and moderation), in addition to detailed descriptions of faculty responsibilities, processes, and tasks, all of which can be found in the **Faculty Handbook**, accessed through their Faculty Moodle account (available on request). Further information and support is available in the Study Skills Handbook, also available on Moodle. Twice each year at the Residentials, in-person training is provided to the teaching faculty. This is typically focused on improving classroom practice, supporting students with learning difficulties and marking. The exact content of this training will be decided by the Academic Team, in consultation with the Study Skills Tutor.

- **Peer reviews:** The faculty is required to take part in a peer review process each year, carried out during the two Residential weeks in September and January. Faculty attend one another's lectures and provide feedback on strengths and opportunities for future improvement. Normal practice is for all faculty to be peer reviewed each year. Where this is not possible, priority is given to new faculty and any faculty who were not peer reviewed the previous year.
- **Student feedback:** At the end of every module, students are invited to give written feedback via an online questionnaire. They comment specifically on the quality of content, delivery, assessment, and feedback given in the module. Their responses are reviewed by the Academic Team and sent to the relevant module tutors. Any observations regarding quality and standards are noted and opportunities for ongoing improvement are discussed. Where the feedback is non-specific to a particular module, it is discussed at the next Board of Studies (BoS) (see below). A Student Representative is elected from each Hub to channel student feedback to the central WTC team throughout the year. Representatives from the Exec and Academic Teams meet with the Student Reps twice a year to answer questions and respond to specific feedback. Opportunities for improvement are noted and discussed with faculty as relevant.
- **Board of Studies:** Three times a year, the faculty is invited to attend a BoS meeting online. These meetings are opportunities for the Executive and Academic teams to pass on information, for faculty to discuss any matters that have arisen during the year, for training (e.g. recent BoS meetings have included training in both marking and teaching online seminars), and for discussions concerning key issues of quality and standards that apply across the college. It is common for these discussions to take the form of sharing wisdom and experience, in the spirit of encouraging one another to continually improve our quality of work.

3.3. Assessment

- **Faculty training:** Specific training, delivered by the DUS or DPS, on the processes and standards of marking and moderation of assessments is included in all new faculty inductions. The DUS, DPS and Study Skills Tutor are available to provide further support in marking as needed. As noted in section 2, marking and moderation training is also provided regularly at Faculty Training Days.
- **Marking Criteria:** WTC marks its assessments in accordance with the UoC's level-appropriate marking criteria, as described in the UoC Marking Criteria documents (see section 7.1 of the Faculty Handbook).
- **Assignment Moderation:** Marking quality, standard and the feedback given to students is monitored. All module assessments are moderated by a second member of faculty (where possible, who teaches in the same academic discipline). All marks below 40% (for Levels 4-6), below 50% (for Level 7), or above 69% (for all Levels) are moderated, as well as a reasonable sampling of marks in between (defined as no less than six papers, and approximately a quarter of the papers in total). Where there is a discrepancy between the marker and moderator, they will discuss and decide together on the final mark to be given. Where no agreement can be reached, the relevant Academic Director reviews and decides the final mark. The marking and moderation process for each module is recorded on an Assessment Moderation Form (see section 7.0 of the Faculty Handbook).
- **Dissertation Second Marking:** Consistent and high quality marking is applied to all submitted BA and MA dissertations. All dissertations, at Levels 6 and 7, are marked by two faculty - the student's supervisor (who acts as lead marker) and another faculty member, where possible teaching in the same academic discipline. Both markers determine an appropriate mark and write detailed feedback, according to the Level 7 Marking Criteria (see Section 7.1 of the Faculty Handbook). They then discuss their marks and agree on a final mark and cumulative feedback, which is produced by the lead marker, filling out the documentation found in section 7.2 of the Faculty Handbook. As with all assessment marking, dissertation marking will be the subject of both induction and ongoing faculty training.
- **External Examiner and Module Assessment Board:** At the end of each academic year, all of the marks and feedback given to students across the year are monitored by the EE. The EE confirms that the appropriate quality and standards of marking and moderation have been met, and feeds back to WTC on any action points for raising standards in this essential aspect of the college's academic responsibilities.

- **Academic Integrity:** WTC recognises that academic integrity is a key issue for all academic work. All new students receive training at the start of their studies with WTC on the importance of academic integrity, and the seriousness of academic misconduct and malpractice. All new students sign an Academic Integrity Form following this training. Any suspected issues of academic integrity are referred to the relevant Academic Director who investigates and applies the appropriate penalty in line with the UoC's **Academic Integrity Process** (Appendix 2). New Faculty are introduced to this process as part of their induction and regularly revisited with current faculty at Board of Studies meetings and/or Faculty Training Days.

APPENDIX 1: FACULTY INDUCTION PROCESS

Actions to be completed by <u>incoming Faculty member & all other staff</u> once employment is confirmed	Complete
First Conversation (ASAP) (Academic)	
Discuss WTC values, stakeholders, and partners	
Explain basic functioning of WTC's teaching and assessment	
Send terms letter and Faculty Handbook (Registry)	
Signing Contract (April) (Registry and Operations)	
Consent by email to Safeguarding Code of Conduct	
Sign up to Data Handling Policy	
Signed Terms of Engagement returned	
Faculty details form completed	
Bank details given to the finance team	
Schedule of payments explained	
Get Faculty Approved as Tutor with Chester	
Receive Core documents from faculty	
Preparing for first residential (May/June) (Academic)	
Discuss planning and delivery of Residential teaching	
Discuss parameters of good class-notes	
Discuss recording first CC lectures at the Residential (see below)	
Being an academic outside the classroom (emails, contact with students, availability, etc.)	
Who's who? Registry, IT, Academic, Operations.	
Dissertation supervision where appropriate	
Ministry in the classroom	
Moodle and CDMS Overview	
Explain Discussion/Announcement functions Moodle	
WTC resources overview	

General IT Introduction (before August) (IT Team)	
G-Mail account and 2 factor Auth, and sign in	
Email address in relevant groups	
Google Drive (the basics!)	
Google Calendar	
Google Meet (Video conferencing) and Zoom	
GDPR Training	
CDMS & Moodle Account set-up and confirm login	
Added to relevant WhatsApp groups	
Canned Content Recording and Training (2h at Residential) (Pedro)	
Loom induction and training	
Training for Canned Content (CC)	
Confirm that the first CC lectures will be recorded at the first Resi they attend.	
Record first CC lecture(s)	
Faculty Day (Academic)	
Training for VC's	
Meet Study Skills Tutor	
Understanding the role of Study Skills Tutor	
Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) and disabilities	
Marking Training (week after first submission of essays) (Academic)	
Marking training	
Explain correct use of AMF and check understanding	

Continuing Faculty Process

Actions to be completed by <u>incoming Faculty member & all other staff</u> once employment is confirmed	Complete
First Conversation (ASAP) (Academic)	

APPENDIX 2: University of Chester Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Integrity Policy Additional Guidance for TRS Partnerships

All partners should ensure TRS has an up to date list of AICs. This should be a senior academic in each institution and must be approved by the Head of TRS, as they will operate as the Nominee of the Chair for the purposes of Academic Integrity.

Please use TRSPartners@chester.ac.uk for all correspondence.

The New Policy

The University of Chester has replaced the Academic Malpractice procedures with an Academic Integrity Policy. The new policy is designed to strike the right balance between penalty and education for breaches of Academic Integrity expectations.

The guidance produced by AQSS is very clear, and should be read by all Academic Malpractice contacts. <https://portal.chester.ac.uk/aqss/Pages/aqss-academic-integrity.aspx>
This document is **not** intended to replace the guidance, but should be read alongside it.

In terms of detection, nothing has changed. However, there are significant changes to the outcomes at level 4 and for first offences at every other level. The principle is that students who breach the academic integrity policy should still be given credit for parts of an essay not affected by plagiarism. This means a mark will eventually be awarded for all level 4 work and first offences at level 5. Guidance is offered below.

All forms have been replaced. Therefore all old forms should be deleted. The policy is now in effect (for deadlines beyond 1st September 2017).

We now have two categories of breaches of the Academic Integrity Policy: Unacceptable academic practice and Academic misconduct. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism; reuse of previously submitted material; and collusion. Academic misconduct covers falsification of data; research misconduct; commissioning, and all other forms of cheating. If there is any doubt which category an allegation should come under, seek advice from TRS.

Summary of changes:

- **All work, including repeat offences, at level 4 is now dealt with by the Department using the AI-X form**
- **Work affected by unacceptable academic practice will now be awarded a mark (except for repeat offences at levels 5 and above)**
- **The standard penalty for first offences at level 5 and above (including simultaneous cases) is to sit an online Academic Integrity Course. Upon successful completion a mark can be awarded.**

The Case Files will now consist of the following:

All cases of unacceptable academic practice at level 4, including repeat offences: AI-X

All other cases including academic misconduct at level 4: AI-1, AI-2, and if instructed, AI-0

Initial Detection

It remains the responsibility of all markers to check Turnitin reports for breaches of Academic Integrity. Where plagiarism, reusing work, or collusion is suspected, this must be reported to the Academic Integrity Coordinator (AIC).

Level 4

All Level 4 cases of unacceptable academic practice (plagiarism, collusion, reuse of previously submitted material) generate an AI-X form. The marker should complete Section A (using the paper ID) and Section B and pass this to the AIC. The AIC should review the allegation and determine whether or not to take it further. In practice, the marker may consult the AIC *before* making the allegation. The marker will award a mark (not to be disclosed to the student at this stage) based *solely* on the work not affected by academic malpractice. In some cases there may be nothing left to mark.

The AIC will arrange for the piece to be de-anonymised and fill in the student's name and number, and arrange to see the student to review the work in the normal way. At the meeting, the AIC will go over the piece with the student and disclose the awarded mark, completing Section D. The student should then complete Section E.

Levels 5 and above (and Level 4 cases of academic misconduct).

The form AI-1 should be completed.

The University of Chester recommendation is that the marker enters the paper ID in the box for Student Name, completes section B (so far as the marker knows the information), and Section C very briefly. The AIC should complete the additional information once the paper has been de-anonymised, and should have a standard narrative for Section D. Note that this document is included in the Initial Allegation documentation, so it should be factual in nature.

Making an allegation

The AIC decides whether or not to take the case forward and prepares the documentation, which should include: Form AI-1; Initial allegation covering letter; the Turnitin report (showing **clearly** what is included in the allegation); any other evidence; and guidance from the Student Union. The student should be given a date to attend a meeting (see Template letter), which should be no earlier than 7 days from the date on the letter, but should be as soon as practical after this date. (Note, some of the information on the old form is not sent at this time).

Meeting with student

The AIC should meet with the student to go over the evidence, giving the student an opportunity to respond. The purpose of the meeting is to make a decision whether or not a charge of academic malpractice can be sustained, **and** to offer developmental help. The student should be in no doubt how to avoid plagiarism in future. The meeting is recorded on form AI-2. [All level 4 cases of unacceptable academic practice, **including repeat offences**, are dealt with using only the AI-X].

While all level 5 and above cases go to AQSS for a final decision, first offences will attract a standard penalty, which is now **the student must sit an Academic Integrity Course. After successful completion, the student will be entitled to a provisional mark for the work unaffected by unacceptable academic practice.**

While the guidance states that the AI-0 form should be completed when AQSS ask for it (which will be on the successful completion of the AI course), it is my *recommendation* that for first offences at Levels 5 and above the AI-0 form should be completed at this stage. This will speed up the process. The marker should award a mark for work not affected by Academic Malpractice. The mark should be monitored, and if there is disagreement the AIC should act as third marker. **This mark should not be disclosed to students under any circumstances.** See below for further guidance.

The case file (AI-1; Cover letter; AI-2 and AI-0) should be sent to TRS, for approval and forwarding to AQSS. The complete case file for each student should be sent in a single email. Level 4 cases (AI-X form and essay) are for statistical data. First offences at Level 5 and above, which are eligible for a standard penalty will be considered by a standing committee. All other cases will be considered by a Panel.

Note: Multiple ‘first’ offences at Level 5 and above will be considered concurrent so long as the student has not had the initial meeting prior to submission of the next piece of work (non-attendance at meeting will not be regarded as mitigation). However, all other multiple offences will be considered consecutively.

Marking work affected by unacceptable academic practice

All work at level 4 will receive a provisional mark to be recorded on the AI-0 form. First offences at level 5 and above *may* also receive a provisional mark on successful completion of the online Academic Integrity course. However, **only AQSS can release the mark for levels 5 and above.**

Awarding marks for pieces containing breaches of Academic Integrity is the most significant change in the process. This recognises the often disproportionate penalty for what might be relatively small or concentrated affected breaches. The principle is that areas affected by unacceptable academic practice should be completely disregarded and the student should gain credit for what is left. **It is not an expectation that what remains should automatically fail.** The student should be given a mark that fairly reflects the content of what remains once the affected areas are removed. All such work **must** be monitored, and if a fail mark is awarded, it will need to be approved by an external examiner. Marks should not be deducted for inevitable resultant poor grammar caused by removing words in the middle of sentences. If the two markers cannot agree, the AIC should act as a third marker. If the AIC is one of the markers, another third marker should be appointed. In the first year, it is advisable for the AIC to review each case to ensure some consistency. The TRS AIC will automatically review the cases as they come in.

If the offence is correctly quoting but habitually omitting quotation marks, the markers may decide to take account of some of the affected areas on the grounds that it is a single punctuation error repeated.

It is difficult to give definitive guidance about marking such work. Academic judgement should be used, observing the principle that the disregard of the affected material *is* the penalty. No further penalty should be imposed in the marking process.

The AI-0 form should be completed prior to the case file being sent to TRS. It should be completed no later than 7 days after a decision has been made to proceed. Marking should only take place once the AIC has decided which portions of the essay should be excluded. **On no account should the student see the AI-0 form. For Level 4 students, the mark should be entered in Grademark once the process has ended. Level 5 students will be informed of their mark by AQSS.** Students who do not successfully complete the AI course will be awarded a mark of zero.

Feedback to students with work affected by Academic Malpractice

The main academic advice to students who have breached the Academic Malpractice policy is how not to breach it in future. Beyond this, the mark awarded on the AI-0 form should be justified by the comments. Any further feedback to the student will be at the marker's discretion. Should the student eventually have to resit the assignment, then it would be helpful if the marker gave the student guidance on the likelihood of the piece passing if the academic malpractice is attended to.