



WTC ACADEMIC CONDUCT POLICY

June 2026

WTC Academic Conduct Policy	
Purpose	To outline the principles, policy, and processes in place to ensure a consistent and high standard of academic conduct at WTC.
Enquiries	Enquiries about the Academic Conduct Policy should be directed to the Dean of Studies (Freddy Hedley) or Director of Student Services (Diane Lincoln) at freddy.hedley@wtctheology.org.uk ; academic@wtctheology.org.uk
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Approved by	Executive Team
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Staff member responsible for update	Dean of Studies
Policy / procedure relevant to	External - WTC website; MyWTC

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Introduction

Academic study is grounded in a communal process of investigation and dialogue. One's participation in that is founded on the principles that a student's writing is their own and that their knowledge, understanding, and ideas are formed in relation to the knowledge, understanding, and ideas of others. It is therefore essential that academic writing is original (i.e. the student's own words) and clearly communicates the writer's sources of information and insight to the reader. In line with this, WTC expects its students to apply the highest standards of academic conduct in their work. Specifically, 'academic conduct' refers to work that consistently and accurately acknowledges the influence of other sources where appropriate. WTC expects all students to adhere to the principles and conventions of appropriate academic conduct, as outlined in this policy, and therefore it is essential for all students to read and agree to the terms of this policy before commencing their studies.

DIRECTION TO STUDENTS

Within this policy you will find a link to an information video, plus written details about what constitutes a breach in appropriate academic conduct, how it is dealt with, and what guidance WTC offers. Please watch and read this carefully, and check the boxes at the end to confirm that you have done so and to confirm your agreement.

Section 1: Academic Conduct Video

All students must watch a video outlining the principles and practices relating to academic conduct. This video is titled 'How to study with appropriate academic conduct' and can be found via [this link](#) or in the 'Study Skills Support and Resources' section on Moodle (Subsection 1a: Getting prepared generally). There is also an accompanying pdf. Having watched this, students must confirm that they have done so, that they understand the policy, and that they agree to abide by it.

If there are any questions arising from this video, students should contact either the Dean of Studies or the Learning Development Support Tutor.

Section 2: What is Academic Conduct?

Appropriate academic conduct refers to the fair representation of how one's knowledge, understanding, and ideas are formed, and is demonstrated by a consistent and accurate acknowledgement of others' work when it has in any way influenced one's own work. This influence may be represented as clearly as a direct quotation or summary of someone's work, or it may be more subtle, merely

shaping the content and direction of one's thoughts. For the purposes of a university qualification, there are strict rules against copying material where the source of this material is not noted or acknowledged and is therefore being presented as if it were the student's own work and words. This includes any sources, whether quoted, summarised, or influenced by. Examples of sources are books, articles, dissertations, other students' essays, your own essays, or websites. The practice of copying without acknowledgement, whether or not it is deliberate, is known as 'plagiarism' and constitutes 'unacceptable academic practice' and 'academic misconduct'.

To avoid this, the following principles must be applied:

- In all assessed work you should distinguish information that has been obtained appropriately and which is a fair representation of your own efforts, knowledge, and understanding.
- Moreover, you should take care to acknowledge the work and opinions of others and avoid any appearance of representing them as your own.
- Specifically, it is necessary in academic work to refer to and sometimes quote from or summarise the work of others. Whenever you do this, the source of the material and/or words must be explicitly acknowledged, whether in the text or in footnotes, even if you put others' ideas or knowledge in your own words.
- When referencing, it is important to follow the SBL referencing system, as outlined in the Study Skills section on Moodle. This ensures that all necessary information has been included and provides a consistent presentation that makes it easier for tutors to quickly identify that appropriate academic conduct has been applied.
- If you reuse work from a previous assessment, make sure to declare this and to include an appropriate source reference in a footnote.
- Unacknowledged quotation or even close paraphrasing of other people's writing, amounting to the presentation of other persons' thoughts or writings as one's own, is plagiarism and will be penalised.

This is not an exhaustive list, and the Academic Conduct Policy might be breached in ways not specifically referred to here.

Section 3: Copying and Plagiarism

Copying as plagiarism may take several forms and exist in varying degrees:

- It might be an attempt to pass off whole sections from a book or article or another student's essay or dissertation as if these were one's own work.
- It might be an attempt to construct an essay or dissertation by linking together various paragraphs and/or sentences from the written work of several different people (so-called 'cut and paste').

- It might consist of word-for-word ('verbatim') copying out of passages and sentences.
- It might consist of passages or sentences largely copied out but with a few words or phrases changed.
- It might be that the whole of a student's essay or dissertation has been copied or plagiarised, or that only parts of it are taken from the work of another.
- It might be downloading or purchasing a piece of work and claiming that it is your own
- It might be commissioning a piece of work from a ghost writer, whether a human or by means of AI tools.
- It might be fabricating references or falsifying data in an assignment or including material directly from the internet without referencing the URL for the site.
- It might be improper use of artificial intelligence tools to create material as described below.

Any copying or plagiarism, by whatever means, is improper and dishonest.

Section 4: The Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools

The rise in readily-available generative AI programs, such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini, is well-documented and represents both an opportunity and a risk for students. On the one hand, such tools may provide a new avenue for research or help with the preparation of work; on the other, it presents students with an ethical choice since they must ensure that their written work does not include any content that is not their own creation (quotes/references notwithstanding). This factor is complicated by the fact that generative AI tools present themselves as creating original content when in fact they may be responding to uncited information drawn from elsewhere, or even claiming to reproduce cited information that is in fact generated as an approximation of someone else's work.

Beyond the possibility of ghost-written work, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT can present deeper issues. They generate content through the reappropriation of others' work, as they are trained through an accumulation of unattributed sources so they can replicate similar information and 'copy' writing style. Since this is developed without recognition of sources, they produce inherently plagiarised material. Moreover, while AI tools can produce 'human-like' expression and can be effective at gathering and ordering information, they are not always accurate, and they are, as yet, unable to apply the critical thinking skills required for a university-level assessment. For example, gathering data is quite distinct from gauging its value or truthfulness and, as a result, AI tools can (and do) produce false statements and may collate information that does not belong together. This adds layers of uncertainty when deciding how to handle what is produced.

One recent development is the introduction of AI-driven transcription tools such as Otter and Fathom, which can both transcribe and summarise live-delivered material, whether online or in-person. While this can seem like a useful classroom aid, and has potentially positive applications for some learners, it raises a number of concerns that outweigh any potential benefits. The first relates to intellectual property, since it creates an uncertainty as to who owns the intellectual rights to any summarised material. All taught material is the intellectual property of the teacher, and while student note-taking necessarily includes recording another's intellectual property, it also reflects the student's own learning and sifting of which information is important. If an AI tool does this, the personal contribution of the student is lost and the intellectual property rights become unclear. The second concern relates to data protection, since WTC lectures, VCs, and online drop-ins are environments in which personal information may be shared, and students have the right for this not to be recorded. The third concern relates to academic integrity, since AI-generated material and summaries do not represent a student's own work, cannot be reproduced as such, and cannot be cited as a legitimate academic source. Finally, it raises a learning concern, insofar as it replaces the value of a student's own note-taking and has the potential to reduce a student's immediate engagement in a class.

In addition to these issues, a further complication is the ever-widening application of AI tools to all forms of digital media, including AI-driven writing aids (such as spelling and grammar checkers, as well as tools such as Grammarly that make suggestions for improved writing-style), and web-based search engines (almost all search engines such as Google now offer AI-generated answers as part of their search results). All of this leads to a general uncertainty of what can and cannot be used.

What CAN be used:

1. Students are permitted to use generative AI tools for the purposes of research and for brainstorming ideas. However, it is vital that any information gathered is checked and verified through other sources, since AI can produce inaccurate results, and can even invent material, including quotes and citations. Any use of AI-generated false information would constitute a use of generative AI that breaches WTC's Academic Conduct policy and may result in disciplinary action, including failing an assignment and having the incident added to a student record. Therefore, the best way to think about AI for research purposes is that it is a good place to start, but the wrong place to finish.
2. Students are permitted to use internet search engines to find information, because the search results include the source of the material, which can then be evaluated and, if acceptable, cited as needed. It is also acceptable to use specialist online databases or websites to which one has legitimate access (such as online dictionaries or guides to citations) because its source can be

evaluated, and the owner of the material has chosen to make it available for use.

3. Students are permitted to use the built-in spelling and grammar checking tools that are now standard to all word processing and office-related programmes. Students may also use other software packages such as Grammarly Go and Copilot solely for the purpose of correcting mistakes.

What CANNOT be used:

1. Students are not permitted to include any written material that has been directly generated by an AI tool.
2. This includes writing guidance generated by software such as Grammarly or Copilot. To clarify, these tools may be used to identify and correct mistakes (including spelling, punctuation, word order), but must not be used to suggest alternative words or better expressions.
3. Students must also not include citations of any AI-generated material in their writing. AI-generated material is not considered an academically legitimate source of information.
4. Students may not use AI transcription tools such as Otter and Fathom during VCs, drop-ins, or other live WTC classes.

The use of any such material is considered a serious breach of the Academic Conduct Policy. All written material must be the student's own words or a clearly cited quotation from another original source.

This policy applies to any and all AI tools that exist, including both online generative tools such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Otter, Fathom, Wolfram Alpha (and others), or tools that are or can be integrated into existing software packages, such as Grammarly Go and Microsoft 365 Copilot (and others).

Section 5: Breaches of appropriate Academic Conduct

A student will be regarded as being in breach of the Academic Conduct Policy if they act or behave in a manner that is inconsistent with the general definition of appropriate academic conduct outlined in this policy.

A breach of the Academic Conduct Policy may occur when a student knowingly acts in a way that is contrary to the policy or does so inadvertently by means of careless scholarship. Inexperience, inattention, lack of intention or unfamiliarity with the Academic Conduct Policy are not to be regarded as a defence in the event that the policy is breached.

If a breach of appropriate academic conduct is suspected in a submitted piece of work, it will be investigated thoroughly. If it is determined that the work breaches WTC's Academic Conduct Policy then the student will be required to attend a

meeting with the Dean of Studies to discuss the matter. If, as a result of this meeting, WTC decides to bring a charge of 'Unacceptable Academic Practice', the student has the right to appeal the decision; in which case, it will be considered by another arbiter. If, however, the student accepts the charge, then one of the following penalties may be applied:

- For first offences of students in their first year of study at Level 4, a formal warning may be given and the assessment marked down for inappropriate academic conduct.
- For all other first offences (including Levels 4B-7), the assignment will be failed and the student will be required to rewrite it. This resubmission will be capped at a basic pass. The incident will be added to the student's academic record for the duration of the current academic Level of study and removed once this has been completed. (In the case of a programme that only covers one Level - CertHE, GradDip, MA - the incident will be removed before graduation and will not be included on the academic transcript.)
- For subsequent offences, the assignment will be failed, and may be resubmitted for a basic pass. The incident will then be added permanently to the student's academic record and transcript. A wider investigation of the students' prior work will also be conducted to confirm that no other incidents have occurred without being picked up. If other incidents are identified, they will be noted permanently on the student's academic record and transcript. In some cases, further action may be taken, if deemed appropriate by the Academic Conduct Panel. This could include termination of studies.

Section 6: WTC Guidance

To be sure that you are not engaged in any form of plagiarism, WTC offers the following guidance:

- At the end of any piece of written work you must add a bibliography of the books, articles, and essays you have used in its preparation. (These should be the ones you have really used. If you claim to have used material which you have not in fact read, this too is a form of dishonesty and is very likely to be detected by the marker.)
- Be very careful when taking notes from books or articles! (This is the most common error.) You should normally be taking your own notes, in your own abbreviated form; once you begin copying out the author's exact words, when you come to write the essay it is hard to avoid 'borrowing' these phrases, sentences, and lines of argument. So if when reading a book or article you come across sentences or passages which you want to keep a record of, perhaps for later quotation, you must indicate clearly in your notes that it is a quotation or close paraphrase.

- If you quote from the works of other scholars in your essay, you should always put the passage or sentence used in quotation marks and acknowledge its source in a footnote.
- If you paraphrase the words of other scholars in your essay, you should acknowledge its source in a footnote.
- If you use information or describe ideas which are especially identified with a particular scholar, you should again acknowledge this source. You do not need to acknowledge all information and ideas which are shared by many scholars or have become part of general scholarly knowledge, but you should acknowledge work which is unique to a specific scholar.
- Be sure that you don't claim to have read a source quoted in another book without acknowledging the book (or other source) in which it was quoted.
- Most importantly, you must make sure that you understand what plagiarism means and do your best to avoid it. You should access the guidance in the Study Skills Resources to help you understand. In particular, there are resources on the following: Academic Conduct; Noting quotations or paraphrases; How to use quotations and paraphrases in your assignment; Referencing. If you have any doubt at all about the extent to which you may borrow from the work of others, you should check with your tutors.

Section 7: Declaration

It is a WTC requirement that every student must, as part of their annual enrolment on MyWTC, indicate that they have read the above policy and agree to the following declaration:

I have read and understood the WTC Academic Conduct Policy. I understand that all submitted assignments are to be the result of my own work, and that in all cases material from external sources (e.g. in books, articles, essays, dissertations and websites, your own previous essays) should be acknowledged, and quotations and paraphrases be clearly indicated in my assignments.

Information on how to maintain appropriate academic conduct will remain available on MyWTC and Moodle and will be further discussed at the September Residential (for first-year students). However, at all times, it is the sole responsibility of the student to act in a way that is consistent with this Academic Conduct Policy and to seek advice and guidance if they are unclear.

DIRECTION TO STUDENTS

Students should tick the appropriate boxes on MyWTC to confirm that they have watched the video and they agree to abide by this Academic Conduct Policy. If it is not possible to do this on MyWTC for any reason, this policy may be signed and dated here:

I have read and understood the WTC Academic Conduct Policy. I understand that all submitted assignments are to be the result of my own work, and that in all cases material from external sources (e.g. in books, articles, essays, dissertations and websites, your own previous essays) should be acknowledged, and quotations and paraphrases be clearly indicated in my assignments.

Signature:

Print name:

Date: