

Academic Integrity when being invigilated in assessments electronically.

20 May

Dear Student

Do you think you or a friend of yours got away with cheating in the last test cycle?

Honesty and integrity are personal choices and while all systems – from national legal processes and laws to banking to higher education to the vows related to marriage and the rules in a rugby game - try to govern fairness, unfortunately some people will still try to cheat and get credit for things that are not their work and not their achievements.

The reasons for cheating and dishonesty are varied and they range from a basic lack of ethics through a feeling of pressure or inadequacy. In addition, social media is currently full of adverts and messaging encouraging cheating and it is difficult to keep a clear mind about doing things right when doing them dishonestly is presented as so easy and so “normal.” Whatever the motive, dishonesty should never be rewarded as the reason for doing it, does not remove the reality that if you did not earn it, you have no right to it.

It is our role as an educational institution, to keep trying to achieve two things:

- Sharing and rewarding values of integrity and fairness and honesty.
- Developing systems that detect those that are not willing to manage their own conduct so that those that are acting with integrity are not disadvantaged.

The internet, digital forms of communication and more recently, AI, have increased the ease with which people are able to try to cheat. Alongside this these tools are giving those of us that are trying to manage honesty and the integrity of qualifications more tools to catch those that cheat.

We have recently, alongside many large public and private higher education institutions, adopted The Invigilator App. This is a smartphone based proctoring tool that is specifically designed for the South African environment with more than 750 000 students using the application across more than 50 institutions.

The Invigilator App provides the latest AI driven, test dishonesty mitigation software to protect assessment integrity and through this the integrity of our qualifications.

The App cannot prevent efforts to cheat – only individual students can do that. The App does improve our ability to detect the dishonesty by flagging the work a student has submitted if it does not seem likely that the work is an original representation of what a student knows. We are adding additional human driven checks – for specific reasons and on a random sample – to ensure that cheating students do not make it impossible for honest students to benefit from more flexible assessment conditions.

What happens after you have submitted your assessment through the app?

If something prohibited (such as talking, or not submitting on both platforms or failing to submit your assessment in pdf) happens while you are writing, your assessment will be flagged. The system also checks assessments against each other and flags if there are unexpected similarities such as when students copy from each other or another source. It also records the times you did things including when and where you went to on other resources such as myNGI.

The data generated by the app, is processed and available to your lecturers and to the central team who are tasked with catching cheaters.

We will be giving all flagged students a mark of 0% unless our data analysis clears them. We are also instituting disciplinary action against some of the students which may result in their expulsion from NGI.

Our detection and investigation start with the data the App gives us and what we get from myNGI and then includes physical flagging by lecturers (who see their words from slides copied into answer papers as an example) and by the randomised process of submitting your assessments through our Plagiarism Checker and our AI checker (and that of the App itself).

Various checks are done in this process. They are done in the App, through myNGI and after a handwritten piece of work is converted to text using OCR (optical character recognition).

We are not sharing with students all the ways in which we are checking the work and undoubtedly some will get away with cheating some of the time (as is already happening with other methods of assessment) but it is our commitment that no one will get away with it all the time and our sanctions will be strict and uncompromising – **starting with 0% and moving to expulsion**. Students have the right to appeal any of these outcomes but if they are found to have been dishonest it will impact their academic journey with us and is information we will share through a certificate of conduct with other institutions. When we impose a sanction for cheating, we reserve the right to go back and look at other assessments done by the student, and we can remove and cancel credits already awarded.

No system of invigilation or cheating detection has ever been perfected – and AI has indeed added a layer of complexity. Please be cautioned however that when you are caught it will result in the kind of penalties that may impact your ability to graduate.

Kind Regards

Student Support