

Ethics Policy



POLICY # EAAS/2024/240258

Adopted by the Senate on July 15, 2024

European Academy of Advanced Studies (EAAS)

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Contents

1. Purpose	3
2. Scope	3
3. Status and Legal Framework.....	3
4. Definitions	4
5. Core Values	4
6. Code of Conduct.....	4
6.1 Academic integrity	4
6.2 Research and supervision ethics.....	5
6.3 Respectful conduct.....	5
6.4 Professional conduct.....	6
6.5 Conduct in digital learning environments	6
6.6 Ethical use of artificial intelligence	6
7. Data Protection and Information Management	7
8. Reporting Violations.....	7
9. Investigation, Enforcement and Appeal.....	7
10. Ethics Education and Training.....	8
11. Monitoring, Review and Version Control	8

1. Purpose

This Ethics Policy ("the Policy") establishes and promotes a culture of integrity, honesty, fairness, and respect across the European Academy of Advanced Studies (EAAS). It sets out the ethical standards expected of every member of the EAAS community and the mechanisms by which those standards are supported, monitored, and enforced.

As a fully online higher education institution, EAAS recognises that ethical conduct must be defined not only for traditional academic activity but also for the digital environments in which teaching, assessment, supervision, and administration take place. This Policy therefore addresses the ethics of online learning, digital assessment, artificial intelligence, and personal-data handling alongside the established principles of academic and professional integrity.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all members of the EAAS community, in all activities carried out in the name of, or on behalf of, the Academy whether conducted online or offline, on institutional platforms or personal devices. It applies to:

- students registered on any EAAS programme, including applicants during the admissions process;
- academic staff, including part-time, adjunct, and visiting lecturers, supervisors, and external examiners;
- administrative, technical, and support staff;
- members of the Senate / Academic Council, the Board of Advisors / Management, and all institutional committees; and
- contractors, consultants, and industry partners acting on behalf of EAAS.

3. Status and Legal Framework

This Policy is a linked policy under the EAAS General Academic Regulations and is to be read together with the Student Code of Conduct Policy; the Academic Integrity, AI, Online Assessment and VLE Use Policy; the Assessment, Marking and Grading Policy; and the Data Protection Policy. Where a linked policy provides greater operational detail, that policy governs the detail; where there is a conflict on an academic matter, the General Academic Regulations prevail.

The Policy is made under, and interpreted consistently with:

- the Further and Higher Education Authority Act (Chapter 607) and S.L. 607.03;
- the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586) and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679;
- the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF);

- the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG 2015); and
- the MFHEA Guidelines for Quality Assurance for Online Learning Providers in Malta.

4. Definitions

Term	Meaning
EAAS / the Academy	The European Academy of Advanced Studies.
Member of the community	Any student, academic staff member, administrative staff member, contractor, visiting lecturer, external examiner, or collaborator acting on behalf of EAAS.
ECC	The Ethics and Compliance Committee, the body responsible for oversight, investigation, and enforcement under this Policy.
VLE	The Virtual Learning Environment, including Moodle, Big Blue Button, and any associated institutional platform.
Generative AI	Any artificial-intelligence tool capable of producing text, code, images, audio, or data in response to a prompt.
Academic misconduct	Plagiarism, collusion, impersonation, contract cheating, falsification of data, and prohibited or undeclared use of AI, as defined in the Student Code of Conduct Policy.

5. Core Values

- **Integrity-** We act with honesty, transparency, and accountability, and we take responsibility for our decisions and their consequences.
- **Respect-** We treat every individual with dignity, and we sustain a supportive and inclusive community across cultures, time zones, and modes of participation.
- **Fairness-** We apply our policies, procedures, and judgements equitably, consistently, and without bias.
- **Excellence-** We hold ourselves to high standards in teaching, learning, research, and service, and we improve continuously in response to evidence.
- **Academic freedom-** We protect the freedom of staff and students to teach, learn, question, and publish, exercised responsibly and within the law.

6. Code of Conduct

6.1 Academic integrity

- **Honesty in submitted work.** Students must submit work that is their own and must attribute all sources accurately. Plagiarism, collusion, impersonation, contract

cheating, falsification of data, and undeclared use of generative AI are prohibited and constitute academic misconduct.

- **Fair and objective evaluation.** Academic staff must mark student work impartially, on merit, against the published rubric, and free from personal bias. Significant assessments are subject to second marking, internal moderation, and external examination.
- **Originality screening.** All summative submissions are screened through Turnitin. A similarity report is never determinative on its own; every flagged case is subject to human academic review before any finding is made.
- **Transparency of criteria.** Assessment criteria, rubrics, weightings, and deadlines are published in advance on the VLE, so that students are judged against standards they were able to see.

6.2 Research and supervision ethics

- Research conducted under the auspices of EAAS must meet the highest standards of integrity, including accurate recording and reporting of data, appropriate acknowledgement of all contributions, and the declaration of funding sources.
- Research involving human participants requires prior ethical clearance, informed consent, and a data-management plan compliant with the GDPR.
- Supervisors must provide guidance without appropriating a student's work, must observe published feedback timelines, and must declare any interest that could affect the impartiality of examination.
- Fabrication, falsification, and the misrepresentation of authorship are treated as serious misconduct.

6.3 Respectful conduct

- **Non-discrimination.** Discrimination or harassment on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, or any other protected characteristic is prohibited, consistent with the EAAS Gender Equality and Diversity Policy.
- **A harassment-free environment.** EAAS maintains a learning and working environment free from harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation. This extends to conduct in live sessions, discussion forums, chat channels, email, and any institutional or programme-related digital space.
- **Inclusive communication.** Members are expected to use respectful and inclusive language in all interactions, and to recognise the linguistic and cultural diversity of an international online cohort.
- **Reasonable adjustments.** Members must support the accessibility measures the Academy provides for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties and must not disclose a student's support needs beyond those with a legitimate reason to know.

6.4 Professional conduct

- **Conflict of interest.** Members must avoid situations in which personal, financial, or intellectual interests could conflict with their institutional obligations, and must disclose any actual or potential conflict to the relevant authority before participating in a decision. Staff involved in teaching, grading, recruitment, procurement, or collaboration decisions submit an annual conflict-of-interest declaration, held on a register maintained by the Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit.
- **Confidentiality.** Members must respect the privacy of information concerning students, colleagues, and the Academy, and must not disclose it except where required by law or authorised by policy.
- **Responsible use of resources.** Institutional accounts, licences, databases, and platforms are provided for institutional purposes and must be used accordingly. Credentials are personal and must not be shared.
- **Truthful representation.** No member may misrepresent the Academy's accreditation status, awards, partnerships, or the qualifications of its staff, in marketing material or otherwise.

6.5 Conduct in digital learning environments

- Live sessions and lectures may be recorded for pedagogical and quality-assurance purposes. Participants are informed in advance, and recordings are retained, accessed, and deleted in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.
- Recordings, course materials, and the contributions of other participants must not be redistributed, published, or commercially exploited without authorisation. Intellectual property in academic work and digital content is governed by the EAAS intellectual property arrangements.
- Online assessment may involve identity verification and proctoring. Such measures must be proportionate, announced in advance, and applied consistently. Students who raise a substantiated privacy objection are offered an alternative assessment arrangement, such as a supervised oral examination.
- Attempting to circumvent proctoring, secure browsers, authentication, or VLE access controls is a breach of this Policy.

6.6 Ethical use of artificial intelligence

EAAS treats generative AI as a legitimate tool whose use must be declared and bounded, not as a category of prohibited technology.

- **Students.** Permitted and prohibited uses are defined at module level and published with the assessment brief. Where AI is permitted for supporting tasks such as literature searching or structuring, its use must be declared. Generating assessed content and presenting it as one's own is contract cheating.

- **Staff.** AI-assisted marking or feedback tools may support, but never replace, academic judgement. Every grade released to a student must have been reviewed and is owned by a named human marker. Student work must not be entered into any AI tool that does not meet the Academy's data-protection requirements.
- **Institutional systems.** AI-supported learning analytics, engagement monitoring, and at-risk identification operate under human oversight. Analytics output alone never determines a disciplinary, progression, or award decision.
- **Review.** The ECC reviews AI-related provisions at least annually, considering emerging practice and regulation.

7. Data Protection and Information Management

Personal data is processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently under the GDPR, the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586), and the EAAS Data Protection Policy. Access to student records is restricted to authorised personnel with a legitimate need. Academic records are retained for 40 years in accordance with MFHEA guidelines; non-academic records are retained for a shorter defined period. Data collected through the VLE, and learning-analytics systems is processed only for legitimate institutional purposes, and students may access their own records on request.

8. Reporting Violations

- **How to report.** Suspected breaches of this Policy may be reported to the Ethics and Compliance Committee through the reporting channel published on the student portal and staff intranet. Reports may be submitted anonymously, although anonymity may limit the Academy's ability to investigate fully.
- **Acknowledgement.** Receipt of a report is acknowledged within two working days, and the person reporting is informed of the process and its indicative timelines.
- **Protection against retaliation.** Retaliation against any person who reports a suspected violation in good faith, or who participates in an investigation, is itself a breach of this Policy and is treated as serious misconduct. This protection does not extend to reports made maliciously or in bad faith.
- **Confidentiality of the process.** The identity of the reporting person, and of the person reported, is disclosed only to those with a legitimate need to know.

9. Investigation, Enforcement and Appeal

The Ethics and Compliance Committee (ECC) investigates reported violations promptly, impartially, and thoroughly. No person may investigate or decide a matter in which they have an interest or prior involvement. Both the person reporting and the person reported are given a fair opportunity to be heard and to present evidence before any finding is made. Findings and reasons are issued in writing.

Sanctions are proportionate to the seriousness of the breach and are applied on a tiered basis:

Level	Indicative sanction
First / minor breach	Formal written reprimand; mandatory academic-integrity or ethics training; resubmission of the affected work where appropriate.
Second / substantive breach	A mark of zero for the affected assessment; recording of the case on the academic misconduct register; a further reprimand.
Serious or repeated breach	Failure of the study-unit; suspension of registration; in the most serious cases, expulsion or, for staff, termination of engagement, following a full disciplinary review.

Supportive and preventative measures — including integrity counselling, citation and referencing support, and self-service integrity tools are offered alongside sanctions where appropriate.

A person subject to a decision under this Policy has the right of appeal. Appeals follow the routes set out in the Student Code of Conduct Policy the Student Grievance Redressal Committee and the Institutional Appeals Committee and are heard by persons not involved in the original decision, with written outcomes and reasons. Where internal remedies are exhausted, a student retains the right to refer the matter to the Office of the Ombudsman of Malta.

10. Ethics Education and Training

- Ethics and academic integrity are embedded in orientation and onboarding for all students, faculty, and staff.
- Workshops, webinars, and digital training modules address academic integrity, research ethics, responsible use of AI, digital security, and inclusive online teaching.
- Academic staff receive training in the ethical design of online assessment and in the use of originality-detection tools.
- This Policy, and the procedures under it, are published on the EAAS website, the student portal, and the VLE.

11. Monitoring, Review and Version Control

- The ECC reports annually to the Senate / Academic Council on cases handled, outcomes, trends, and any resulting recommendations, in an Annual Ethical Oversight Report.
- This Policy is owned by the Senate / Academic Council, maintained by the Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit, and reviewed at least annually or upon regulatory change, emerging ethical risk, or evidence from case review.
- Amendments are approved by the Senate / Academic Council and communicated to students and staff.

