Bolton College

Plagiarism & Academic Malpractice Policy 2023-24

Contents

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1. Introduction

1.1 As an organisation that carries out assessment, Bolton College (the College) has an obligation to ensure that the qualifications students receive are a fair and accurate representation of their work, and of the knowledge and skills attained.

1.2 Plagiarism, and other forms of academic malpractice, undermine the value of qualifications by causing a negative impact on their credibility with students and prospective employers.

1.3 Where academic achievement is gained by unfair means, the achievements of others who gain the same qualification fairly are compromised. For these reasons the college will take all appropriate measures to ensure that students' work is in fact their own, and that plagiarism and other forms of academic malpractice do not take place.

1.4 The college will also take appropriate action retrospectively where it is detected that plagiarism or academic malpractice has taken place.

1.5 Where a higher education (HE) course has an awarding organisation, HE teachers and students are governed by and must adhere to the awarding organisation regulations and procedures regarding any use of unfair means. In all cases HE teachers and students are governed by and must adhere to the College's Higher Level 4/5 Student Academic Malpractice Policy and Procedures 2022-2023.

2. Definitions

2.1 Any and all forms of academic malpractice may be the subject of the procedures described below. Each case will be considered on its merits and on the basis of the strength of evidence.

2.3 The following sections highlight some key forms of academic malpractice but should not be viewed as exhaustive.

3. Plagiarism

3.1 Plagiarism is a form of academic malpractice which Neville (2007) describes as "knowingly taking and using another person's work and claiming it, directly or indirectly, as your own".

3.2 Plagiarism may appear in the form of deliberately seeking out and copying the work of other students.

3.3 The most common form of unintentional plagiarism consists in failure to reference sources appropriately. In this case the student appears to be passing off the work of others as their own, not through a deliberate attempt to deceive the assessor, but through a failure to attribute authorship appropriately.

3.4 In order to avoid such problems, all students must use an appropriate referencing system. Harvard referencing is the preferred method at the College.

If there is an established practice that is not Harvard, applicable to specific subjects studied, the course teacher is responsible for signposting and providing the correct guidance.

3.5   Whether it is intentional or inadvertent, plagiarism interferes with the accurate assessment of a student's ability and thereby subverts the purpose of assessment.

4.   Artificial Intelligence

4.1   AI use refers to the use of AI tools to obtain information and content which might be used in work produced for assessments which lead towards qualifications.

4.2   AI chatbots are AI tools which generate text in response to user prompts and questions.

4.3   AI chatbots can complete many useful academic tasks such as the following:
- Answering questions
- Analysing, improving, and summarising text
- Authoring essays, articles, fiction, and non-fiction
- Writing computer code
- Translating text from one language to another
- Generating new ideas, prompts, or suggestions for a given topic or theme
- Generating text with specific attributes, such as tone, sentiment, or formality
- Generate images and designs

4.4   The College is committed to a future facing and balanced approach to the use of AI technologies which enables students to use AI technology effectively, responsibly and ethically.

4.5   The Joint Council for Qualifications states that AI misuse includes, but is not limited to, the following:
- Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the student's own
- Copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content
- Using AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the student's own work, analysis, evaluation or calculations
- Failing to acknowledge use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information
- Incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools
- Submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies.

4.6   AI misuse constitutes malpractice as defined in the JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures (https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/).

4.7 Detailed College specific guidance on acceptable and unacceptable use of to support the development of student work can be found in the 'Artificial Intelligence Ethical Framework and Use Policy. Follow the guidance there carefully to inform decisions around academic plagiarism involving AI.

5. Academic Malpractice

Academic malpractice includes:

- Communicating with or copying from any other candidate during an examination unless the examination regulations specifically permit this e.g. group assessments.
- Communicating during an examination with any person other than a properly authorised invigilator or another authorised member of staff.
- Introducing any written or printed materials into the examination room, unless expressly permitted by the examination or programme regulations.
- Introducing any electronically stored information into the examination room, unless expressly permitted by the examination or programme regulations.
- Gaining access to any unauthorised material relating to an examination during or before the examination.
- Obtaining a copy of an "unseen" written examination paper in advance of the date and time for its authorised release.

In any other way, the provision, or assistance in the provision, of false evidence or knowledge of understanding in examinations.

6. Collusion

Collusion exists where a candidate:

- Submits as entirely his/her own, work done in collaboration with another person, with the intention to gain an unfair advantage.
- Collaborates with another candidate in the completion of work which is intended to be submitted as that other candidate's own unaided work.
- Knowingly permits another candidate to copy all or part of his/her own work and to submit it as that candidate's own unaided work.

7. Falsifying Data

The presentation of data in laboratory reports, projects etc. based on experimental work falsely purported to have been carried out by the candidate or obtained by unfair means.

8. Personation

8.1 "Personation" is the legal term of what is usually referred to by the lay person as "impersonation". Personation is the assumption by one person of the identity of another person with intent to deceive or to gain unfair advantage. It may exist where one person assumes the identity of a candidate, with the intention of gaining unfair advantage for that candidate.

8.2   The candidate is knowingly and willingly impersonated by another with the intention of gaining unfair advantage for himself/herself.

9.   Dishonest Practice

Dishonest practice covers the use of any other form of irregularity not identified by the above definitions.

10.   College Approach

The College is committed to the detection of plagiarism, to taking appropriate measures when it is detected and to the implementation of preventative measures including:

- The training of its staff in plagiarism prevention and detection.
- Informing its students of the College position on plagiarism.
- Engendering in its students an ethos of fairness and appropriate reward for effort expended.
- The promotion of effective assessment design and assessment practice
- Ensuring that students are properly instructed in what constitutes fair practice and appropriate referencing.
- Taking disciplinary action as appropriate.

11.   Responsibilities of Teachers

11.1 Ensure that student work submitted for purposes of assessment is in fact their own work.

11.2 Inform students about plagiarism and other forms of academic malpractice and how it will be monitored.

11.3 Explain to their students the unethical nature of plagiarism.

11.4 Explain, at an early stage of the course, the concepts of individual ownership of ideas and words, the ownership of electronic material and the difference between 'intellectual property' and 'common knowledge'.

11.5 Provide instruction in study skills, research skills, writing skills, time-management skills and the use of a suitable referencing system to record and cite sources correctly such as the Harvard system. Students can be referred to the learning resource centre (LRC) for extra support if required.

11.6 Clarify the College's approach to plagiarism and the consequences non-compliance via this policy.

11.7 Take all possible measures to ensure that when plagiarism occurs it is detected, and appropriate action taken.

11.8 Gather evidence of plagiarism or academic malpractice carefully where it is detected and retain it under password protection for the duration of any investigation.

11.9 Treat evidence of plagiarism or academic malpractice confidentially and share it only with those persons whose professional roles are directly relevant to a given specific case.

11.10 Destroy all records of investigations appropriately once an investigation is complete, and the period of time required for their retention has elapsed in keeping with GDPR policy of the College.

11.11 Apply this policy equitably and consistently within the ethos of the College's Single Equality Scheme.

11.12 Model good practice through their own use of good referencing practice.

11.13 Take preventative action through appropriate assessment design. For example:
- Frequent, and at least annual, changing of assessment instruments
- Contextualised assessments
- The use of question banks rather than identical assessment for all students
- Ensuring appropriate supervision of students

11.14 Ensure that all activities with learners maintain professional integrity with regard to assessments. Any and all academic support offered to students must comply with the normal professional standards and ethos outlined in this policy.

11.15 If a member of staff is found to have colluded or to have been actively involved in learner malpractice, this will lead to the staff disciplinary process being invoked.

12. Responsibilities of Students

12.1 Students must present their own work, and only their own work, with honesty, transparency and integrity when they submit any form of assessment.

12.2 Inform themselves with regards to the rules on correct acknowledgement of sources and to adhere to them in all circumstances.

12.3 Ensure that the words and arguments of others are appropriately cited and referenced using an accepted referencing system such as the Harvard referencing system.

12.4 Appropriate use of research, whether from written sources or the internet, is valid where the source is appropriately acknowledged.

12.5 Changing the wording of a source text so that the overall meaning is retained (paraphrasing) is valid academic practice. However, the source text must be acknowledged appropriately or this practice is still classified as plagiarism.

Copying and pasting larger quantities of material from an internet source or other source does not necessarily constitute plagiarism if it is acknowledged in referencing. However, it is extremely inadvisable in terms of academic standards and will result in severely reduced grades and probable failure of assessment, as it does not evidence the development of understanding or competence which is necessary for meaningful achievement.

12.6 In short, work submitted by students must be their own unless it is otherwise acknowledged through appropriate referencing that this is not the case originality was clearly not a requirement of the assessment being undertaken.

13.   Action on Detection of Plagiarism

13.1 All instances of plagiarism, whether intentional or not, require action.

In all cases, the member of staff must take care to ensure that there is clear evidence that plagiarism has taken place.

In all cases, the student must be informed clearly of the unacceptability of plagiarism and the need to abide by this policy and not any older versions.

In all cases, the relevant course leader, Curriculum Leader, Head of Area and Head of Quality must be informed so that any wider patterns of poor practice can be identified.

13.2 The minimum remedial action for an incidence of plagiarism which has a material effect on a grade or qualification gained, must be that the assessment is retaken with an alternative assessment instrument, for example a different assignment title, question or project. This must be recorded as a second attempt at the assessment.

13.3 Where plagiarism arises from a failure on the part of the student to reference correctly, or to understand the requirements of the assessment, such issues must be addressed before the assessment is retaken, for example via revision of correct referencing practice.

13.4 If an incidence of plagiarism is more significant, or where it appears more widely among a cohort of learners, more extensive actions may be needed. These might involve any or all the following:
- A review of initial assessment and whether the student/s is/are on the right course.
- Curriculum team reflection on whether there have been omissions or shortcomings in course content or course design.
- Curriculum team reflection on whether there have been omissions or shortcomings in teaching or learning.
- Curriculum team reflection on the clarity of assessment instructions.

13.5 Where, based on the evidence collected, it is the judgement of the relevant staff that an instance of academic malpractice with intent to deceive has occurred, disciplinary action must be taken.

Such disciplinary action must primarily comply with the policies and procedures of the relevant awarding organisation.

In such cases, where the work has been in any way graded or submitted to the awarding organisation, that awarding organisation must be notified.

13.6 From this point onwards, any subsequent investigation must follow the requirements of the awarding organisation.

13.7 Disciplinary action must also refer to, and comply with, the College's Positive Behaviour Policy.

13.8 Staff and students should note that assignments submitted via Turnitin will be scanned for plagiarism automatically.

13.9 In such cases as stated in 13.5, sanctions as specified by the relevant awarding organisations policies will be applied. For example, a candidate may be disqualified from further qualifications with that awarding organisation. See the JCQ Malpractice Policies and Procedures document for an overview of sanctions that may be applied.

14. References

JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications. (n.d.). Malpractice. [online] Available at: https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice). [Accessed 24 Apr. 2023].

Neville, C. (2016). The complete guide to referencing and avoiding plagiarism. London: Open University Press.