

Malpractice/Code of Conduct Policy for Assessing Coursework Assignments Policy

Responsibility for Review: Exams officer

Date of Next Review: November 2024

Statement of Intent

An analysis of the statistics for malpractice in examinations shows that the incidence of plagiarism is rising. This has been recorded by Awarding Bodies and is a concern of the universities as well.

The effect of this rise in plagiarism is to call into question the integrity of examinations generally and, especially those assessment components such as coursework where plagiarism can be undertaken most easily. If coursework is to remain as a viable assessment method it is the duty of all who are preparing and assessing candidates for examinations as well as those who have an interest in the setting, marking and administration of examinations, to do whatever they can to address and seek to reverse the rise of plagiarism.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with 'Information to Candidates: GCE, ELC, Project Qualifications, Coursework Assessments (JCQ document) and Information for Candidates Controlled Assessment (JCQ document)

What is Plagiarism?

“The failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of another person’s work as if it were the candidate’s own.”

Mostly, plagiarism refers to copying from published texts whether these are in print or on the internet, but it can also refer to copying from manufactured artefacts, or essays or pieces of work previously submitted for examinations.

A strict interpretation of the term “work” in the above definition would include the original ideas, as well as the actual words or artefacts produced by another. Unless the candidate has submitted an extensive and unacknowledged paraphrase (amounting to more than 50% of the total) of another person’s writings, however, the Awarding Bodies will not include paraphrasing under the definition of plagiarism. Instead markers should reflect the incidence of any paraphrasing in the way they apply the markscheme. On the other hand, plagiarism will cover the direct and unacknowledged translation of foreign language texts into English.

It should be noted that in the context of the Joint Council Awarding Bodies, plagiarism does not include collusion, ie working collaboratively with other candidates; neither does it include copying from another candidate in the same examination session. Both of these are defined as different forms of malpractice.

By virtue of its definition, plagiarism is restricted to those examination components where students undertake examination work in unsupervised conditions, such as coursework, pre-release work, or the compilation of research notes which can be used in the examination. It can also occur when candidates are permitted to annotate texts and bring these into the examination room.

How am I expected to prevent plagiarism?

If you are teacher or assessor entering candidates for a qualification with a coursework component, you must accept the obligation to authenticate the work which is submitted for assessment. You must confirm that the work produced is solely that of the candidate concerned.

You must not accept work which is not the candidate’s own. If plagiarism is discovered prior to the signing of a declaration of authentication the incident need not be reported to the Awarding Body, but you should deal with the matter in accordance with your own centre’s procedures. Please refer to the section below ‘What do I do if I Suspect Work has been Plagiarised?’

In order to prevent plagiarism you:

- should make students aware of the guide to acknowledging other people’s work;
- must ensure that each candidate for GCE, GCSE, BTEC, OCR Nationals, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge TECS is familiar with Notice to Candidates: Coursework and Portfolios (JCQ document) and Information for Candidates Controlled Assessment (JCQ document). All students are issued with this in the student’s examination booklet which they must sign for;
- must ensure that each candidate understands the contents of the document; particularly the meaning of plagiarism and what penalties may be applied;
- should reinforce to a candidate the significance of their signature on the form which states they have understood and followed the coursework and portfolio requirements for the subject;
- should teach the conventions of using footnotes and bibliographies to acknowledge sources. There is no one standard way of acknowledging sources but the use of inverted commas, indented quotations, acknowledgement of the author, line/page number, title of source, indicate that the candidate is using a source. Teachers and students should be aware that when acknowledging sources clarity ensures that there is no suspicion of plagiarism;
- should teach the use of quotation marks when sources are quoted directly (a suggested guideline for the need to put items in quotation marks would be the use of more than six words in unchanged form);
- should set reasonable deadlines for submission of work and provide reminders;
- should give time for sufficient work to be done in class under direct supervision to allow the teacher to authenticate each candidate’s whole work with confidence;
- should examine intermediate stages in the production of work in order to ensure that the work is underway in a planned and timely manner;
- should introduce classroom activities that use the level of knowledge/understanding achieved during the coursework thereby making the teacher confident that the student understands the material;
- should explain the importance of the candidate producing work which is their own and make them aware of the plagiarism/malpractice policy;
- must not accept, without further investigation, work which you suspect has been plagiarised; to do so encourages the spread of this practice;

What can I do when I receive work?

Dealing with plagiarism

There are three steps in the process for dealing with plagiarism:

- keeping watch
- confirmation
- reporting

There are a number of clues that point to the possibility of plagiarism, and you should remain alert to the possibility of spotting these.

Keeping Watch on content

You should check a candidate's work for acknowledgement of sources as the work is being completed. Particular care should be taken when candidates submit work without completing intermediate stages.

Varying quality of content is one of the most obvious pointers. Well-written passages containing detailed analyses of relevant facts alternating with poorly constructed and irrelevant linking passages ought to give rise to suspicion.

If the work is not focused on the topic, but presents a well-argued account of a related matter, this could be a sign that it has been used elsewhere. The same applies if parts of the work do not fit well together in developing the response to the assignment.

Keeping watch on vocabulary, spelling and punctuation

The use of a mixture of English and American vocabulary or spellings can be a sign that the work is not original. If the piece contains specialised terminology, jargon, obscure or advanced words, the teacher should ask if this is typical of this level of candidate and reasonable, or is it because the candidate did not write the passage. Is the style of punctuation regular and consistent?

Keeping watch on style and tone

Look for differences in the style or the tone of writing. If a candidate uses material from textbooks alongside items from popular magazines the change of tone between the two should be marked.

Look at level of sophistication of the sentence structure. Is this the sort of language that can be expected from the candidate? Is the use of language consistent, or does it vary? Does a change in style reflect a change in authorship at these points?

Keeping watch on presentation

Look at the presentation of the piece. If it is typed, are the size and style of font uniform? What about the use of headers and sub-headers? Are the margins consistent throughout? Does the text employ references and if so is the style of referencing consistent? Are there any references, for example, to figures, tables or footnotes, which don't make sense (because they have not been copied)?

Lack of references in a long, well-written section could indicate that it had been copied from an encyclopedia or similar general knowledge source.

Look out for quotations that run on beyond the part which has been acknowledged.

What do I do if I suspect work has been plagiarised?

Confirmation

If you suspect that an assignment has been plagiarised, the next step is to try to locate the source.

The easiest method is to type a four to six word phrase from the text (preferably one with an unusual phrase in it) directly into a search engine such as Google and perform an "exact phrase search". If the article was copied from the free, visible web there is a good chance this approach will find it, particularly if a few search engines or detection sites are used.

Another method is to look through the web-sites that students use, as these are common sources for essays and assignments.

If you suspect that the work is a copy of work previously submitted by another candidate then share the work with colleagues to see if they can identify the source.

The Process:

1. As the assessor you will complete a 'Internal Investigation of Suspicion of Malpractice report. You will inform the candidate that you suspect their work to be plagiarised, identifying the section(s) you suspect maybe plagiarised.
2. You will then inform the internal verifier/DoL of your suspicions and the internal verifier/DoL will investigate the claim and submit the report to the Deputy Principal: Curriculum or Assistant Principal managing the relevant key stage
3. The Deputy Principal Curriculum or Assistant Principal managing the relevant key stage will call a meeting with the assessor, examinations officer and the candidate to discuss the matter.
4. If the case is proved the school have the right to apply any sanctions they see fit that match the seriousness of the case. The sanctions below are a guide only:

1st offence

A letter is sent home to inform parents. The candidate will be required to stay after school to re submit the work. This will need to be done under supervision and must be hand written or completed on a device with no internet access.

2nd offence

5. A letter is sent home to inform parents. The candidate will have a fixed term exclusion and parents/carers will be required to come into school for a meeting with the Deputy Principal Curriculum or Assistant Principal, assessor, examinations officer and the candidate to discuss the matter. The candidate will be required to stay at the end of school to submit their own work which will be done under supervision, as outlined above.

3rd offence

6. A letter is sent home to inform parents. The candidate will have a fixed term exclusion and parents/carers will be required to come into school for a meeting with the Principal, Deputy Principal Curriculum or Assistant Principal, assessor, examinations officer and the candidate to discuss the matter. The candidate will be required to stay at the end of school to submit their own work which will be done under supervision, as outlined above.

4th offence

7. A letter is sent home to inform parents. The candidate will have a fixed term exclusion and parents/carers will be required to come into school for a meeting with the Principal, Deputy Principal Curriculum or Assistant Principal, assessor, examinations officer and the candidate to discuss the matter. The candidate will be unable to submit work for the unit in question, risking their entry on the course and place at the academy. The Principal reserves the right to permanently exclude the student

What if the work has been copied from another candidate?

If work is submitted that is a copy of another candidates work then this should be treated more severely. A candidate cannot inadvertently submit this without an awareness that the work is not their own.

The Process:

1. As the assessor you will complete a 'Internal Investigation of Suspicion of Malpractice report. You will inform the candidate that you suspect their work to be a copy of another candidate's work
2. You will then inform the internal verifier/DoL of your suspicions and the internal verifier/DoL will investigate the claim and submit the report to the Deputy Principal: Curriculum or Assistant Principal managing the relevant key stage
3. The Deputy Principal will call a meeting with the assessor, examinations officer and the candidate to discuss the matter.

4. If the case is proved the school have the right to apply any sanctions they see fit that match the seriousness of the case. The sanctions below are a guide only:

1st offence

A letter is sent home to inform parents of all students involved. The candidates will be required to stay after school to re submit the work. This will need to be done under supervision and must be hand written or completed on a device with no internet access.

2nd offence

5. A letter is sent home to inform parents of all students involved. The candidates will have a fixed term exclusion and parents/carers will be required to come into school for a meeting with the Deputy Principal Curriculum or Assistant Principal, assessor, examinations officer and the candidates to discuss the matter. The candidates will be required to stay at the end of school to submit their own work which will be done under supervision, as outlined above.

3rd offence

6. A letter is sent home to inform parents of all students involved. The candidates will have a fixed term exclusion and parents/carers will be required to come into school for a meeting with the Principal, Deputy Principal Curriculum or Assistant Principal, assessor, examinations officer and the candidates to discuss the matter. The candidates will be required to stay at the end of school to submit their own work which will be done under supervision, as outlined above.

4th offence

7. A letter is sent home to inform parents of all students involved. The candidates will have a fixed term exclusion and parents/carers will be required to come into school for a meeting with the Principal, Deputy Principal Curriculum or Assistant Principal, assessor, examinations officer and the candidates to discuss the matter. The candidates will be unable to submit work for the unit in question, risking their entry on the course and place at the academy. The Principal reserves the right to permanently exclude the students

It may well be the case that by disqualification from the unit the candidate is unable to complete the course successfully. In all cases the parents will be contacted by letter.

If the malpractice is discovered prior to the candidate signing a declaration that this is their own work and prior to submission of marks to an awarding body, this will be dealt with through the process outlined above.

If it is discovered after submission of marks to the awarding body then JCQ Form M1 will be submitted to the awarding body and the sanctions in JCQ document Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments Policies and Procedures Appendix 4 applied

[Handwritten signature]