

Academic Offences Policy

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1. PURPOSE

The College exists to provide and extend education and training amongst the communities it serves. An important aspect of academic endeavours is recognition of the effort and work of the individual learner. As such, the College views attempts to falsely claim the achievements of others as one's own, as a serious academic offence and will deal with such actions in a fair and just manner. The College will respond effectively and openly to all requests for an investigation into a suspected academic offence.

The College will not tolerate academic offences or attempted academic offences committed by learners or staff. This policy sets out the College's arrangements for dealing with academic offences committed by learners and staff and should be read in conjunction with the College's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

For policy on malpractice relating to Awarding Organisations see the JCQ publication Guidance for dealing with instances of suspected malpractice in examinations, the latest issue www.jcq.org.uk.

Academic offences are defined as:

1.1 Cheating in an examination

Copying from the work of other learners, obtaining help from other learners in a way that contravenes the regulations for the examination, bringing into the examination any unauthorised materials, or referring during the examination to any unauthorised material, or any form of impersonation.

1.2 Plagiarism

This means copying work from any other source published or not, in a manner not authorised by the regulations for assessment and presenting the copied work as if it were the learner's own work. Work presented by a learner in assessment must be the learner's own and where exceptions are permitted, any such exceptions must be clearly identified, and the source fully acknowledged (including downloads from any internet site).

1.3 Fabrication of information

This is the presentation of any false or fabricated information, results, or conclusions in any form of assessment, including practical or field work studies, oral presentations, unpublished work, and including the work of fellow learners, interviews, and reports from work placements, etc.

1.4 Collusion

This is the deliberate and intentional collaboration, without official approval, between two or more learners in the development and production of work that is eventually submitted by each learner, in a substantially similar and/or identical form; and is presented by each learner to be the outcome of his or her individual efforts. Collusion also occurs where there is unauthorised co-operation between a learner and another person, in or outside of College, in the preparation and production of work, which is ultimately presented, as the learner's own.

2. ACTION TO BE TAKEN AT THE TIME OF ANY SUSPECTED OFFENCE

2.1 Cheating in Examinations

If an invigilator in an examination has cause to suspect any learner of cheating, for example by the discovery of unauthorised books or papers brought into the examination, these will be confiscated when discovered and any work done by the learner up to that time will be suitably annotated. The learner will, however, be allowed to complete the examination. At the end of the examination the learner may be asked for an explanation. Unless a totally satisfactory response is received, the invigilator will submit a written report to the Examinations Officer. This report will include a description of the evidence that cheating has occurred, together with details of the learner's name, the date and time of the examination and any other relevant information. Where material is confiscated, this material should be presented along with the written report. The Examinations Officer will forward this information to the examining body in line with Examination Regulations.

If the Examinations Officer believes there are prima-facie grounds to support an allegation of cheating, then the Director of Curriculum will arrange a disciplinary hearing in accordance with the Learner Disciplinary Policy.

The hearing will be attended by:

- The learner (who may be accompanied by a friend who is not a member of the legal profession, a parent/guardian/carer)
- The Examinations Officer
- The relevant Director of Curriculum
- The invigilator or person making the complaint
- Administrator to minute the proceedings

2.2 Plagiarism / Fabrication

Where a member of teaching or assessing staff marking an assessment, or otherwise associated with the presentation of an assessment, suspects plagiarism or fabrication, the matter will be reported to the relevant Director of Curriculum via a written report. The written report must include the appropriate details, including the nature of the alleged offence and the evidence for suspecting it. The process outlined in the College's Learner Disciplinary Policy will then be followed.

2.3 Higher Education

Where an academic offence occurs as part of a higher education award validated by an awarding university, the procedures outlined by that institution should be followed.

2.4 Collusion

Where a member of teaching staff marking an assignment, or any piece of work associated with the assessment of modules/units, suspects unauthorised collusion between two or more learners in the production of that piece of work, the matter will be reported to the relevant Deputy Director of Curriculum responsible for the programme via a written report. The written report should include: the nature of the alleged offence; the names of the learners suspected of colluding; and the evidence upon which the allegation is based. If the Director of Curriculum believes there are prima facie grounds to support the allegation of collusion the learner(s) will be informed, and a disciplinary hearing will be arranged in accordance with the Learner Disciplinary Policy.

The hearing will be attended by:

- The learner (who may be accompanied by a friend who is not a member of the legal profession, a parent/guardian/carer)
- The Examinations Officer
- The relevant Director of Curriculum
- The person making the complaint
- Administrator to minute the proceedings

Guidance on assessment malpractice

The college requires assessors in centres to ask learners to declare that their work is their own, for instance: - for internally assessed units, assessors are responsible for checking the validity of the learner's work. For NVQs, learners must provide a written declaration that the evidence is authentic, and that the assessment was conducted under the requirements of the assessment specification.

Please refer to the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy for further guidance.

3. PENALTIES

Where cases of academic offences are proven, penalties will range from re-sitting the examination or setting specific tasks to being asked to withdraw from the course. The Director of Curriculum will liaise with the relevant Curriculum Team Leader and Course leader to determine the specific penalty to ensure that it is appropriate and proportionate. Where appropriate external awarding or validating organisation regulations will be applied (copies held by the examinations office). Impersonation is a criminal offence and will be dealt with accordingly.

Where appropriate, all other assessment of the learner shall be suspended until the decision is known. Meetings will be fully minuted and the learner informed of any decisions in writing.

An appropriate specific task might be the completion of an alternative assignment, to be regarded within the assessment rules as a re-sit. The authenticity of this piece of work may be determined by a professional discussion. The original piece of work will be discarded.

4. APPEALS

Any appeals against decisions arising from an academic offence will be conducted in line with the College's Learner Disciplinary Policy and the Assessment of Learning and Competence Policy.

5. REPORTING

All academic offences should be reported to the Director of Quality and Performance within 5 working days of an offence being reported. Where an offence relates to a higher education award the case must be reported to the Director of Quality and Performance prior to any contact being made with the awarding university. The reporting of an academic offence should include details of the person or persons involved, the awarding organisation, qualification, the alleged offence, and the person identifying the alleged offence.