



AI (Artificial Intelligence)

Version History

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Introduction

This policy outlines the responsibilities of Centres in identifying, managing, and preventing the misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in learner assessments. As AI technologies continue to evolve, it is essential that Centres maintain rigorous quality assurance processes to ensure the authenticity and integrity of all submitted work. The misuse of AI, including the submission of AI-generated content without proper acknowledgement, is considered malpractice and will be treated accordingly. This policy sets out clear expectations for Centres and details the actions that will be taken by the Focus Awards and External Quality Assurers (EQAs) where persistent AI misuse is identified and not addressed. Maintaining the validity and credibility of qualifications is a shared obligation, and Centres must act proactively to uphold these standards.

What is AI Misuse

The use of AI pertains to using AI techniques to acquire information and material that may be utilised in work produced for assessments leading to qualifications.

The imminent expansion of AI technologies and their capabilities does not mitigate the fact that any misuse of AI in qualification evaluations constitutes malpractice. Educators and learners must recognise that AI technologies are rapidly advancing; nonetheless, they still include limits, including the potential to provide erroneous or inappropriate material.

AI chatbots are artificial intelligence technologies that produce text in response to human enquiries and instructions. Users may pose follow-up enquiries or request the chatbot to amend previously given replies. AI chatbots generate responses to prompts based on patterns identified in the extensive data sets (big language models) on which they have been trained. They provide replies that are statistically probable to be pertinent and suitable.

The utilisation of AI chatbots may provide considerable hazards when employed by pupils throughout qualification examinations. As previously said, they have been designed to generate replies based on the statistical probability of the chosen language being suitable, so the responses cannot be deemed reliable.

AI chatbots frequently generate responses that, although seemingly credible, may include inaccurate or biased information. Certain AI chatbots have been recognised for delivering perilous and detrimental responses to enquiries, and others are capable of generating fictitious citations for books or papers attributed to both actual and fabricated individuals. Students are required to produce original material for assessments.

This entails guaranteeing that the final result is articulated in their own language, devoid of any copying or paraphrasing from external sources, including AI tools, and that the material embodies their individual effort.

Students must exhibit their knowledge, abilities, and comprehension as stipulated for the relevant qualification and outlined in the qualification specification.

This entails showcasing their performance about the assessment objectives pertinent to the subject associated with the questions or other assignments assigned to pupils.

Although AI may evolve into a standard instrument in the industry, it is crucial for students' advancement that they do not depend on AI tools for the demonstration of knowledge, comprehension, and abilities required for credentials. Students must cultivate the knowledge, abilities, and comprehension of their respective topics.

Currently none of our qualifications require learners to produce work using any AI products. Direct use of AI, without reference, is considered plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined as the submission of someone else's work, either willingly or unwittingly, as your own. Focus Awards will view the use of AI in learner work and/or in assessment procedures as a form of malpractice.

Centres must take all reasonable steps to identify the risk of the occurrence of plagiarism. Whilst this is nothing new to Centres, and strategies should already be in place to minimise the risk, the use or misuse of AI is a new factor for Centres to consider.

Guidance below will help support Centres to reduce their risk of malpractice through AI misuse:

- Students should be made aware that if they submit work in which they have misused artificial intelligence (AI) they have committed malpractice.
- We recommend including this in any student handbooks and plagiarism policies. It may also be useful as part of any assignment brief.
- Students and Centre staff must be made aware of the risks to the Centre of using AI in their work.
- Centres must ensure students' work is demonstrably their own. We recommend students' work is authenticated through a signed declaration; the signature may be 'wet' or electronic.
- Centre staff must identify where AI responses are generated in the learner work. Any AI generated work should not be marked and the learner must be sanctioned in line with the Centre's plagiarism policy.
- Tutors and assessors must only accept work which they consider, and are confident that, is the student's own work.
- Where Centre staff have doubts about the authenticity of student work submitted (for example, if they suspect plagiarism and the use of AI), they must investigate and take appropriate action in line with their plagiarism policy.
- Learners are permitted to use AI for research purposes and quote from or reference the sources appropriately in that work, but the work (including reasoning and conclusions drawn) must always be their own.
- Centres are expected to explain to students at the start and early stages of courses what AI is, how it links to plagiarism, how it will be monitored, and the potential sanctions associated with using AI in their work.
- Centres could provide an instruction manual for students as part of the learner handbook, to explain and clarify the use and misuse of AI and other issues with plagiarism.
- Centres should train assessors in the identification of plagiarism and the use of AI in learner work.
- Internal quality assurance measures must be robust enough to ensure Centres' internal quality assurance procedures identify the use of AI in learners work, which could, for example, require learners to use a reference page and in text referencing to identify sources of research.
- Centres could set an early assignment assessment or test as a standard measure to gauge the standard of the learner work. This could support future identification of plagiarism and the use of AI.

Tips to Identify AI Misuse in Learner Work

Tutors should look for unusual or complete phrases that a student would not normally employ. For example, submitted work might include:

- Grammar and syntax of a standard far higher than that demonstrated previously
- Inconsistent styles, tone, or tense changes, which may be a sign of AI-derived materials
- Overuse of information
- Irrelevant information
- Americanisation of words and terms

If any such 'tell-tale' signals appear, tutors/assessors should investigate. They could:

- Ask follow-up questions of the learners
- Create innovative assignments (check with Focus Awards' EQA for any changes to assignment tasks)

Persistent findings of AI during the sampling process

Centres are reminded that they bear full responsibility for ensuring the authenticity of learner work submitted for qualification assessments. It is expected that assessors verify the originality of all learner submissions and that Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) apply consistent scrutiny through systematic sampling procedures. Any failure in identifying non-authentic work at these levels is regarded as a serious lapse in assessment integrity and compliance.

The presence of such content had not been identified or challenged by the Centre's assessors or IQAs. Where this pattern is evident across multiple learners or assessment occasions, it constitutes a failure by the Centre to uphold its responsibilities under the Centre Agreement and applicable quality assurance standards.

If Focus Awards and EQA identify persistent or widespread use of AI in learner submissions that has not been appropriately flagged, investigated, or sanctioned by the Centre, this will result in a formal escalation. In such cases, the following actions may be taken:

1. **Referral Back to Centre:** The EQA will refer affected learner work back to the Centre for immediate investigation. The Centre must initiate an internal review, implement appropriate sanctions per its plagiarism policy, and report findings back to the AO within a specified timeframe.
2. **Centre Malpractice Investigation:** Where persistent AI misuse goes undetected or unaddressed, the Centre may be subject to a malpractice investigation. This process may include an audit of assessment practices, staff training records, internal verification documentation, and interviews with relevant personnel.
3. **Sanctions:** If malpractice is confirmed, the AO reserves the right to impose appropriate sanctions. These may include the downgrading of Centre status, increased EQA scrutiny, temporary suspension of certification claims, or in serious cases, withdrawal of Centre approval.
4. **Mandatory Training and Remediation:** Centres may be required to implement corrective actions such as staff retraining in AI detection and plagiarism protocols, revisions to assessment and verification procedures, or the development of Centre-specific guidance on AI use and misuse.
5. **Learner Impact:** Where learners have submitted work containing unreferenced or inappropriately used AI-generated content, the work will not be accepted for marking. Learners may be subject to individual malpractice sanctions, including withdrawal of certification claims, registration or disqualification from the affected unit or qualification, depending on the severity and intent.

To prevent such outcomes, Centres must ensure that robust assessment and quality assurance systems are in place. This includes equipping staff with the skills and tools to identify AI use, enforcing declaration-of-authenticity protocols, and embedding clear learner guidance on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use of AI. EQAs will monitor Centres' implementation of these expectations as part of their ongoing quality assurance visits.

Centres are reminded that upholding the integrity of qualifications is a shared responsibility. The misuse of AI, if not adequately addressed, risks undermining the credibility of learner achievements and the Centre's standing as a trusted provider.

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our support team:

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