



Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Plagiarism Policy

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Introduction

This policy sets out the requirements for preventing, identifying and managing the misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and plagiarism in learner assessment. All evidence submitted for assessment must be the learner's own. Assessment decisions must not be confirmed until the authenticity of the learner evidence has been established. Centres are required to implement effective assessment and quality assurance processes to ensure the authenticity of learner evidence and comply with this policy.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- establish the requirements for maintaining the authenticity of learner evidence;
- define the acceptable and unacceptable use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in relation to assessment;
- define plagiarism and the responsibilities of all parties in preventing it;
- provide Centres with a consistent framework for identifying, investigating and managing concerns relating to the authenticity of learner evidence;
- outline the role of Focus Awards and External Quality Assurers (EQAs) where concerns are identified; and
- ensure that assessment decisions are valid, reliable and based upon authentic learner achievement.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- all Focus Awards approved Centres;
- all learners registered on Focus Awards qualifications;
- all assessment methods, including written assignments, portfolios, projects, professional discussions, observations, presentations, case studies, witness testimonies, practical assessments and any other evidence submitted towards the achievement of a qualification;
- all assessors, Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs), External Quality Assurers (EQAs) and other individuals involved in the assessment and quality assurance process.

This policy should be read alongside the Focus Awards Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, Appeals Policy, Centre Agreement and any relevant qualification assessment strategies.

Principles

Focus Awards is committed to ensuring that all assessment decisions are valid, reliable and based on authentic learner evidence.

Assessment decisions must not be confirmed until the authenticity of the learner evidence has been established.

Professional judgement must always be applied when determining the authenticity of learner evidence. AI detection software, plagiarism detection software and other automated tools may support investigations but must not be relied upon as the sole basis for an assessment or malpractice decision.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Definition

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to digital tools and systems capable of generating content, responding to prompts or assisting with the creation of written, visual or other forms of material.

Acceptable Use

AI may be used to support learning, research and the development of knowledge and understanding outside the assessment process.

Learners remain responsible for verifying the accuracy of any information obtained through AI by referring to reliable and authoritative sources.

The use of AI during learning does not remove the learner's responsibility to produce authentic assessment evidence.

Assessment Requirements

AI must not generate, draft, edit, paraphrase, improve, restructure or otherwise contribute to any evidence submitted for assessment.

This applies to all forms of assessment evidence, including written assignments, portfolios, projects, reflective accounts, professional discussions, presentations, observations, witness testimonies and any other evidence used to demonstrate achievement of assessment criteria.

All assessment evidence must represent the learner's own knowledge, understanding, skills and competence.

AI Misuse

AI misuse occurs where AI contributes to evidence submitted for assessment.

Examples include generating assessment responses, rewriting learner evidence, producing reflective accounts, creating case studies or portfolios, generating responses for professional discussions, producing fabricated references or attempting to disguise AI-generated content as original learner work.

Where AI contributes to assessment evidence, the evidence will be considered non-authentic and will not be accepted for assessment.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's work, ideas or intellectual property as the learner's own, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

This includes copying from published sources without acknowledgement, copying another learner's work, collusion, submitting work completed by another individual, reproducing content without demonstrating understanding or reusing previously submitted work without appropriate declaration.

All sources used during research must be appropriately acknowledged in accordance with the Centre's referencing requirements.

Where plagiarism is identified, the evidence will be considered non-authentic and will not be accepted for assessment.

Responsibilities

Learners

Learners are required to produce authentic evidence that demonstrates their own knowledge, understanding, skills and competence.

Learners must ensure that published sources used during research are appropriately referenced and must cooperate with any investigation into the authenticity of their work.

Assessors

Assessors are responsible for determining that learner evidence is authentic before making an assessment decision.

Where concerns relating to AI misuse or plagiarism arise, Assessors must investigate those concerns, document the outcome and seek support from the IQA where appropriate.

Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs)

IQAs are responsible for ensuring that assessment decisions are consistent, valid and based upon authentic learner evidence.

Sampling strategies must include appropriate checks on authenticity and confirm that concerns relating to AI misuse or plagiarism have been investigated before certification claims are submitted.

Centres

Centres are required to implement effective assessment, authentication and quality assurance processes to prevent, identify and manage AI misuse and plagiarism.

Centres remain responsible for all assessment decisions submitted to Focus Awards and must ensure that learner evidence has been authenticated prior to certification claims being made.

Identifying Concerns

Indicators of Potential AI Misuse

Indicators may include significant changes in writing style, inconsistent terminology, generic responses, fabricated references, content inconsistent with previous learner work or responses that do not reflect the learner's demonstrated level of understanding.

Indicators of Potential Plagiarism

Indicators may include identical or highly similar responses between learners, copied published material, inconsistent writing styles, missing references or content that cannot be explained by the learner. These indicators do not, in isolation, constitute evidence of malpractice. Centres are required to investigate concerns using professional judgement and appropriate supporting evidence before reaching an assessment decision.

Investigating Concerns

Where concerns relating to AI misuse or plagiarism are identified, assessment decisions must not be confirmed until the authenticity of the learner evidence has been established.

Centres are required to investigate concerns through appropriate methods, which may include professional discussion, learner questioning, review of previous work, additional assessment evidence or any other reasonable method of confirming authenticity.

All investigations, decisions and supporting evidence must be documented and retained for review by Focus Awards.

Role of the External Quality Assurer (EQA)

EQAs are responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of a Centre's assessment and quality assurance arrangements.

Where concerns relating to authenticity are identified during sampling, the EQA will record the findings, require the Centre to investigate the concerns and may withhold approval of learner evidence until the authenticity of the evidence has been established.

Where concerns are persistent or indicate weaknesses within the Centre's quality assurance arrangements, the EQA may recommend additional monitoring or referral for a malpractice investigation.

Persistent or Systemic Findings

Repeated findings of AI misuse or plagiarism, or repeated failures by a Centre to identify non-authentic learner evidence, may indicate weaknesses within the Centre's quality assurance arrangements.

Where persistent or systemic issues are identified, Focus Awards may require corrective actions, increase EQA monitoring, suspend certification claims, remove Direct Claims Status (DCS), restrict learner registrations or initiate a formal malpractice investigation.

Sanctions and Learner Outcomes

Where learner evidence is determined to be non-authentic, the assessment decision will be rejected.

Learners may be required to produce new evidence, complete additional assessment activities or participate in further authentication processes before assessment can continue.

Where malpractice is confirmed, Focus Awards may apply sanctions in accordance with its Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, including withholding or withdrawing certification where appropriate.

Appeals

Learners and Centres may appeal decisions relating to AI misuse or plagiarism in accordance with the Focus Awards Appeals Policy, following completion of the Centre's internal appeals process.

Contact us

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

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Version History

The version history for this policy is maintained within the Focus Awards Policy Document Control List.