

STUDENT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT AND MALPRACTICE POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to define 'academic misconduct' and 'academic malpractice' and to identify what steps will be taken when it is suspected that a Blackburn College student, studying on any course, is guilty of such behaviour. Academic misconduct is deemed to cover cheating, attempts to cheat, plagiarism, collusion, re-presentation and any other attempts to gain an unfair advantage in assessments. Academic Malpractice normally involves malpractice by a candidate in connection with any examination or assessment, including the preparation and authentication of any controlled assessments, coursework or non-examination assessments, the presentation of any practical work, the compilation of portfolios of assessment evidence and the completion of any examination. This policy is strictly in place in reference to students. For staff malpractice/maladministration please see the '*Staff Malpractice and Maladministration Policy*'. For staff misconduct, please see the '*Employee Code of Conduct*'.

Assessment, for the purposes of this policy, includes all summative forms of written work (including in-class tests), e-assessments, presentations, demonstrations, viva voce, accreditation of prior learning, portfolios and all forms of examination.

This policy links to all 3 of the of the Strategic Pillars in our College Strategic Plan.

2. SCOPE

The Student Academic Misconduct and Malpractice Policy works within the framework of the College's Vision and Mission along with the underlying principles of the Quality Assurance Agency UK (QAA) Quality Code for Higher Education, our Office for Students commitments, the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, and the awarding and examining bodies that the College engages with, as well as the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). The College will apply the principles inherent in this policy fairly to all students. This policy will be applied to all learning programmes across the College within Further Education (FE), Higher Education (HE) and Work-Based Learning.

For FE students, this policy should be read in conjunction with the relevant Awarding Organisation guidance around academic misconduct and student malpractice. The College will discharge its duty in relation to internally assessed summative assessment but will always defer to Awarding Organisation regulations (all of which comply with JCQ guidelines) to ensure that assessments conducted at the College are rigorous, reliable and secure.

For HE students, this policy needs to be read alongside the College's Higher Education Academic Regulations.

All students have the responsibility to establish, maintain and develop the academic standards and values necessary for study. Students maintain academic integrity by doing their own work, and by refusing to assist others in deception. Academic misconduct covers cheating, attempting to cheat, plagiarism (including false authorship), collusion, impersonation, commissioning, the use of online essay banks and any other attempts to gain an unfair advantage in assessment. Malpractice is related to the failure to follow the rules of an examination or assessment. Assessments across all types of provision must also be compliant with JCQ guidelines. Students are informed of how to avoid malpractice in a variety of ways, including:

- At the beginning of the year, an email is sent by the Exams Manager to all students directing them to view the JCQ information to Candidates on the Exams page on the Digital Learning Environment. This details what constitutes malpractice and how to avoid it. During the second term, the Exams Manager creates a video that is shared with students via tutorials that clearly lays out what is expected of them during an exam. It also includes a section about malpractice. All students watch this video in tutorials at least once.

- All assessments follow the guidelines of the Awarding Organisation, which comply with JCQ guidelines

Overall strategic responsibility for this policy lies with the Head of Teaching and Learning (for Further Education and Apprenticeships) and Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (for Higher Education). Operational responsibility lies with Heads of School and teaching staff for providing clear guidance to students to ensure compliance with the procedure.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not confined to *cheating, plagiarism (including false ownership), collusion and re-presentation*. It is exemplified as follows:

- **Cheating** is where a student deliberately takes steps to gain unfair advantage in assessment such as when submitting or presenting work for assessment or inappropriate conduct during an examination. This also applies to the theft of another student's work for submission at an interview, or inclusion in a portfolio, for example.
- **Plagiarism** is where a student puts forward for assessment the work or ideas or creations of another, in whole or in part, and presents them as if they were their own work, ideas or creations. Examples include (but are not confined to) any situation where a student incorporates uncited published material, or material produced by another student into his/ her submitted work, without proper referencing therefore implying that it is their own original work. All forms of plagiarism are wrong and to be avoided. However, it is recognised that there are 'levels of plagiarism' for example from direct stealing and passing off (that is using others' material verbatim as if it were one's own without citation) to 'patchwork' or unintentional paraphrasing (paraphrasing without citation/reference) to 'accidental plagiarism' (for example misattribution of citations). Whatever the form, all are wrong, although the form may be taken into account in respect of any sanctions, particularly on a first offence. **Notwithstanding this, the Awarding Organisation's regulations will be enforced.**
- **False Authorship** is a form of plagiarism where the student has deliberately engaged with a third party and/or software tool to complete an assessment, either in part or whole. This engagement can be direct or through an intermediary. This may include work produced by another individual, an essay mill, a commercial service, or through the use of Artificial Intelligence software. As it is the authorship of work that is contested, there is no requirement to prove that the work has been purchased. The submission of undeclared work which is either generated and/or improved by language model software for the purposes of gaining marks/grades will be regarded as False Authorship and interpreted as an attempt to gain an intentional unfair academic advantage. For further guidance on the use of Artificial Intelligence, the Artificial Intelligence policy should be reviewed and adhered to. **Notwithstanding this, the Awarding Organisation's regulations will be enforced.**
- **Collusion** is attempting to gain unfair advantage through the knowing collaboration, without official approval, between students and others (for example other students, friends, family, other third parties) in the preparation and production of work which is ultimately submitted by each in an identical or substantially similar form and/ or is represented by each to be the product of his or her sole and individual efforts.
- **Re-presentation** is where a student presents work, in full or in part, that has already been marked or submitted for another module or qualification regardless of the fact that they were the original author.

The seriousness of academic misconduct is related to:

- The academic level at which the student is studying
- The extent to which the academic misconduct is judged to be deliberate and calculated act (rather than, for example, being attributed to academic naivety)
- The extent of the academic dishonesty
- Whether or not the student has been found to have been guilty of academic dishonesty before.

3. OBJECTIVES

The College will ensure:

- a) The risk of academic misconduct is kept to a minimum through the following activity;
 - Through induction students will understand what academic misconduct is, what might constitute student malpractice and the consequences of suspected malpractice in their work and explain the need for students to authenticate their work
 - Staff talk about ways to minimise academic misconduct with students throughout their programme of study
 - Internal and external verification
 - Work scrutiny and standardisation exercises
 - Internal quality audits
 - Coverage of exam conditions by teaching staff when preparing students for their controlled assessment
 - Invigilator training
 - The use of Turnitin in Higher Education.
- b) All suspected cases of alleged academic dishonesty are reported to the Head of Teaching and Learning (for Further Education or Apprenticeships) or the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (for Higher Education).
- c) Any alleged misconduct or malpractice during an examination, or externally assessed activity, will be recorded on the invigilator's report form, which is given to the Examinations Manager.
- d) The College will conduct a fair and objective investigation into the allegations of academic dishonesty through the Exams Manager.
- e) The College will ensure that the student has the right to fully participate in any such investigations.
- f) The College will ensure that the student has a right of appeal to the College / or Awarding Organisation / institution.
- g) The College will ensure that both FE and HE academic rules and regulations will be adhered to during this process including those of the relevant Awarding Organisation.

3.1 Procedure for investigating suspected academic misconduct

- a) Any alleged misconduct during an examination, or external assessed activity, will adhere to the appropriate procedure in compliance with JCQ's General Regulations for FE and Awarding Institutions Regulations for HE. The Examinations Manager will notify the Director of MIS/IT and the Head of Centre (The Principal and Chief Executive).
- b) The procedure for suspected academic misconduct or malpractice in Higher Education for internally assessed modules should adhere to the UCBC Academic Regulations and the validating institutions requirements.
- c) Suspected cases of academic misconduct or malpractice in Further Education for internal assessment should adhere to the guidance outlined by the Awarding Organisation, in line with JCQ regulations.
- d) For further education, the exams manager will notify the student of the outcome of the investigation. In higher education, this will be communicated to the student via the student facing panel.

4. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Curriculum Managers responsible for Quality were consulted in the creation of this policy, along with the Heads of Quality for both FE and HE and the Head of the Quality of Education. For the most recent revision, the Exams Manager was consulted, along with the Head of Teaching, Learning and Assessment, to ensure full compliance to all stakeholders and to expand the policy to include Malpractice.

5. MONITORING AND REVIEWING

The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement. The effectiveness of the Academic Misconduct Policy will be measured through:

- The audit of assessment (Internal and External)
- Internal Verification records FE and HE.
- External Verification reports FE
- External Examiners reports HE
- Analysis of student feedback
- Module and course evaluations/Programme Evaluation Questionnaire for HE.
- Analysis of complaints and disciplinary trends

6. **RELATED POLICIES/ PROCEDURES**

The policies and procedures related to this Policy include:

- Quality of Education Strategy
- Student Behaviour Policy and Procedure
- Academic Regulations (College and HE awarding provider)
- Quality Assurance Agency UK (QAA) Quality Code for Higher Education
- Staff Malpractice/Maladministration Policy and Procedure
- Artificial Intelligence Policy

7. **MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY**

The Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement is responsible for ensuring the Student Academic Misconduct and Malpractice Policy and procedures are effectively implemented and monitored in both Further and Higher Education respectively. The Heads of School are responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy.

8. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Blackburn College is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and providing a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment means that this policy has been reviewed to ensure that it does not discriminate against (either intentionally or unintentionally) on the basis of any of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and meets our obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, this policy has no adverse impact on any of the above protected groups.

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