

Local Operating Procedure

Plagiarism and Cheating Policy (Includes Artificial Intelligence)

Version Control Sheet

Document Title	Plagiarism and Cheating Policy (Includes Artificial Intelligence)
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Owner	Mike Hampton
Doc version/status	V2
Date issued	15/03/2024
Renewal Date	14/03/2025

Version History

Version	Date	Summary of changes
V1.0	21/09/2023	First Issued
V1.1	17/10/2023	Rebranding only, no content changes
V2.0	15/03/2024	Addition of Artificial Intelligence

Approval

Name	Job Role	Date	Signature
Mike Hampton	Quality Improvement and Audit Manager	15/03/2024	<i>M. Hampton</i>

Change Control

Any requested changes to this document should be emailed to: mike.hampton@serco.com

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Introduction

The term “learner,” within this policy, is used to describe all learners and apprentices involved with Skills and Training Services, this also includes those learners enrolled with subcontractors.

This policy outlines the definitions of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, fraud, and anti-bribery, as well as the process that must be followed in the case of an incident occurring.

Definitions

Plagiarism

The University of Oxford (2023) defines Plagiarism as:

Presenting work or ideas from another source as your own, with or without the consent of the original author, by incorporating it into your own work without full acknowledgment.

Sources of information, including images/graphics:

- Published books
- Published articles
- Content sourced from the internet
- Unpublished documents such as course notes and work from another Learner

Examples of plagiarism could include the following without correct referencing being used (for example [Harvard referencing](#)):

- Copying extracts from another person’s work, published or unpublished
- Use of diagrams, images, course notes
- Summarising/paraphrasing the work of another or using their ideas
- Copying or using the work of another participant (past or present)
- Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) or any other automation tools without prior consent and/or acknowledgment. *See further details in the [AI section](#) of this document.*

Plagiarism also includes the purchasing of essays or downloading them from the internet to submit them as your own work.

Collusion

According to the University of Oxford (2023), collusion involves “unauthorised collaboration between learners, failure to attribute assistance received, or failure to precisely follow regulations on group work projects”, and that “it is the responsibility of the learner to ensure that they are clear about the extent of the collaboration permitted”.

At times learners will be required to work together on projects, however the work submitted must that of their own (unless otherwise specified). It is acceptable to discuss ideas, talk about books, articles, online material, and strategies for example with other learners. It is not acceptable for learners to help each other to produce work that will be submitted as their own and an individual piece of work. Learners must never lend their work to another learner under any circumstances as it may be copied or reproduced. This example would leave both learners vulnerable to an accusation of collusion.

Cheating

Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defines cheating as behaving in a dishonest way to get what you want. Cheating is a form of plagiarism and collusion; examples of cheating may include:

- Gaining access to test papers/answers and using them to give the learner/s an advantage.
- Use of external sources of information, such as the internet, in assessments where this is not permitted.
- Receiving an excessive amount of support from the tutor giving the learner an unfair advantage.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Assessments/Assignments

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to impact on the way learning takes place, however it is important to understand what is and isn't deemed acceptable use when producing assignments/assessment (from this point forward referred to as work). The concept of using AI within learner work might be fairly new (at time of this policy being written), however controls are already in place in relation to this overall Plagiarism and Cheating policy. Learners must follow the principles as outlined in this policy to ensure the academic integrity of their work, ensuring the work submitted is that of their own understanding and demonstrates their own knowledge and skills. This policy is built off the work by the [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\)](#).

[JCQ \(2023\) state](#) that "AI use refers to the use of AI tools to obtain information and content which might be used in work produced for assessments which lead towards qualifications." JCQ goes on to state "While the range of AI tools, and their capabilities, is likely to expand greatly in the near future, misuse of AI tools in relation to qualification assessments at any time constitutes malpractice."

There are various AI/automation tools available, such as chat bots, and this is likely to grow as this area advances. However, at the time of writing this policy, JCQ (2023) provide a list of AI chatbots and other AI tools that are currently available. As outlined in the following link: [AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

One of the commonly used AI tools is Chatbots. Chatbots are often used by individuals to analyse text/information, produce essays/assignments, write computer coding, translate languages, and generate text and ideas. The results out of these tools are produced based on 'statistical likelihood', meaning the results cannot be solely relied upon in terms of accuracy. At the time of writing this policy (March 2024) there have been details released on how the use of AI can lead to factually incorrect information being published. [University of Gloucestershire \(2023\) state](#): "More than four out of 10 people believe AI chatbots always produce factually accurate answers, despite systems being prone to producing multiple errors and other concerns". This means that STS and learners need to be aware of the limitations of relying on AI, this is not only related to the content but also inaccurate/fictitious references used by learners.

Key principles:

- Learners are not permitted to use AI or automation tools when producing their work. In some cases, the work specification will allow the use of AI or automation tools, however this will be made clear by STS in these instances. Without this prior permission from STS, the use of AI or automation tools will be seen as malpractice.
- In instances where AI has been approved for use, learners must ensure that they keep clear records of the AI system used, the questions asked, and the responses received from the AI system. This must be saved in a un editable format such as a screenshot and provide a rationale of how the AI has been used. This evidence must be submitted with the work.
- Learners must only submit work that is their own and with acknowledgments/references to other sources as outlined in the [plagiarism section](#) of this document, this includes when AI/automation tools have been specifically given the permission to use, as per the above point. Learners that have misused AI in their work will have committed malpractice. Tutors/assessors must only accept work from learners that is their own. In instances where an incident occurs the [process](#) outlined in this policy must be followed.
- Where a tutor has any doubts of whether the work (or sections of) has been created using AI, they must investigate this further in line with the [process](#) outlined in this policy.
- This policy will not be impacted by the advancements in AI tools available, as Learners are not permitted to use AI/automation tools without prior permission. In the event that this changes the policy, it will be updated to reflect this.

Examples of AI Misuse:

The below list is not exhaustive and is to demonstrate scenarios where AI may have been misused.

- Copying and/or paraphrasing content (whole or parts of) from an AI generated source.
- AI has been used to complete sections of the assessment/assignment, such as analysis and calculations.
- Not providing clear acknowledgement/referencing of any AI/automation tools used – when permitted to use as outlined above.
- Submitting work with incomplete referencing or references cannot be substantiated.

How to identify potential use of AI:

The below list is not exhaustive and is to highlight the potential signs to look out for with work submitted, that AI has been used by the learner.

- Formatting differences to previous work submitted.
- Spelling and punctuation errors, often this will show as American spellings such as ‘Categorize’, ‘Color’, ‘Apologize’, ‘Organize’ – which also doesn’t follow the same standard as previous work submitted.
- Writing style doesn’t flow within the work and/or doesn’t match previous work submitted.
- Vocabulary being used doesn’t match with the rest of the work and/or doesn’t match previous work submitted. For example, using complex terminology, whereas normally the learner does not write in this way.
- Work can appear disjointed and doesn’t flow.
- A lack of clear acknowledgements/referencing within the work.
- References that have been used cannot be located when searched for by the tutor, leading to the question of whether the reference is genuine or fake.
- Inconsistent use of first person and third person text.
- Content within the work may appear to be vague and not specific, so not meeting the outcomes required.
- The text style/formatting may also appear differently when produced using a word processor where the learner has copied and pasted the content and not reformatted it to match the rest of the work.
- Inclusion, in error, of ‘warnings’ that are generated by AI systems to warn users of the limitations of the system being used.

It is the responsibility of the tutor/person marking the work to ensure themselves that the work produced is that of the learners. It is also recommended that when marking the work, the tutor compares this with previously submitted work. Although there are tools available, [see link to JCQ](#), to aide detection of the use of AI, it is important to recognise that the quality of these does vary. The detection approach is more effective where tutors understand the key signs to look out for in learners work that may have been produced using AI, and not solely reliant on detection software. Below are some other ways to identify whether AI has been used:

- Oral discussion with the learner to gauge their level of understanding in comparison to the submitted work.
- Oral knowledge questioning, asking the learner to apply their understanding outside of what has been included in the work submitted.

For further information it is recommended that tutors familiarise themselves with the JCQ – AI Use in Assessments document: [AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

Fraud and Anti-Bribery

Plagiarism can be seen as an act of fraud. Serco’s supplier code of conduct (2018), see link below, explains that fraud is a criminal offence, and the definition varies across countries, however it always involves the acts of deception and dishonesty. It is an act of fraud to act dishonestly to deceive someone to gain an advantage.

Serco have a zero tolerance on bribery, no matter how small or harmless this may seem. Bribery can include the offer of financial incentive to turn a blind eye. Further information on Serco’s stance on this can be found on Serco’s [mycode website](#).

All Skills and Training Services subcontractors must read and agree to the contents within the [Serco’s supplier code of conduct](#).

Serco [SpeakUp](#) process can be used if you believe someone is breaking the Serco mycode or the law.

Skills and Training Services and Learners Commitment

All learners will be provided information upon induction onto the programme, which will include the various policies they need to be aware of – which includes the Plagiarism and Cheating policy. This also includes details on AI in relation to the learners' assessments/assignments and programme in general.

All learners will be provided information on how to correctly reference other people's/source's work, within their own. All learners will ensure that all work submitted is their own and correctly referenced.

All learners will be reminded of the content of this policy before undertaking any assessment or examination.

Upon submission of assignments Skills and Training Services staff will conduct various checks to ensure plagiarism is not present, this can include (not exhaustive):

- Identify any inconsistency in text formatting which may alert them to the potential of copy and paste taking place.
- Identify any inconsistency with the overall structure/layout, language used and sentence structures.
- Identify spelling inconsistencies such as the use of American and British spellings.
- Lack of referencing.
- Spot checking phrases/sentences using an online search engine, reviewing the results, and comparing similarity.

Process in the Event of an Incident

When a concern over plagiarism, cheating or collusion occurs the person raising the concern must inform the Apprenticeship Manager or Adults Manager (depending on contract) and Head of Skills Delivery within three working days.

The Apprenticeship/Adults manager will conduct a thorough investigation to establish the allegation, by reviewing the evidence available.

In all cases the awarding bodies' requirements must be followed, which may include reporting the incident to them.

Depending on the outcome of the investigation and severity the Apprenticeship/Adults Manager will do one of the following:

- Provide the learner/subcontractor the opportunity to resolve the issue, however keeping a clear audit trail for future reference, such as at EQA visits.
- Provide a written warning (or final warning for reoccurrence) to the learner/staff member/subcontractor
- Provide training and support to staff member/subcontractors
- Further disciplinary action such as removal of the learner from the programme, or following the Serco standard disciplinary procedures for staff members
- Check the learner's understanding via a question and answer/professional discussion activity.

Further Guidance and References

Serco My Code. (2023) Bribery and Corruption. Available at URL: [Bribery | mycode | Serco](#) (accessed 17/08/2023).

Serco Speak Up. (2023) Speak Up – help make it right. Available at URL: [EthicsPoint - Serco](#) (accessed 17/08/2023)

University of Gloucestershire. (2023) AI Lies – Cyber Expert Warning on Growing Misinformation Threat. Available at URL: [AI lies – cyber expert warning on growing misinformation threat - University of Gloucestershire \(glos.ac.uk\)](#) (accessed 06/03/2023)

JCQ (2023) AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications. Available at URL: [AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#). Accessed 06/03/2024

Awarding Body

ILM - [ILM policies and guidance – Information for centres \(i-l-m.com\)](#)

NCFE - [Mandatory policies and fees | NCFE](#)

C&G - [Centre document library | City & Guilds \(cityandguilds.com\)](#)

TQUK - [Policies - TQUK EPA](#)