

Plagiarism Policy

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Barking & Dagenham College

Our Vision

A Truly Great College, delivering inspirational learning and excellence through career focused education.

Our Mission

To unleash potential, creating better futures for our learners, businesses and communities.

Our Values

Learner and customer focused – ensuring they are at the heart of everything we do

Respectful – by valuing and treating all fairly and as individuals

Passionate – demonstrating energising, engaging and inspiring all to achieve their potential

Collaborative – always working together to achieve excellence and growth

Innovative – leading the way, seeking new ways to continually improve

Excellent – in learning, teaching and assessment, the key to our success

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1 Introduction

Plagiarism, cheating, collusion and attempting to obtain an unfair academic advantage are forms of academic misconduct and are entirely unacceptable for any learner at a further education college. This policy defines what the College means by plagiarism, gives examples of the categories of other forms of unacceptable academic misconduct outside examinations, gives guidance to staff to help prevent the occurrence of such misconduct, determines the procedures to be adopted in suspected cases and indicates the academic penalties which may be appropriate in proven cases.

In establishing this policy, the College is seeking to maintain the integrity of its academic awards and procedures and to give any learners affected a fair opportunity to respond to any allegation of academic misconduct. Each case will be determined on its own facts and merits. Accordingly, it may be necessary to adjust the procedures to allow a proper investigation or to ensure fairness to the learner concerned in any case. It may be necessary for the College to seek legal advice in specific cases. The procedures in this policy are not contractual in nature and there is no right to compensation for any amendment to the procedures.

The policy is for use outside public examinations, where the examining boards' own procedures will apply. It includes college-assessed work which contributes towards external examination marks.

2 What activities are included in the Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work, words, images, ideas, opinions or discoveries, whether published or not, as one's own, or alternatively appropriating the artwork, images or computer-generated work of others, without properly acknowledging the source, with or without their permission.

Learners must be the authors of their own work. Content produced by AI platforms, such as ChatGPT, does not represent a learner's own original work so would be considered a form of academic misconduct to be dealt with under the College's disciplinary procedures.

Using any AI program/software to write assessments is considered a form of plagiarism and may seriously impact on a learner's academic career.

Plagiarism by learners can occur in examinations but is most likely to occur in a Further Education College outside sat, unseen exams, i.e. in coursework, assignments, assessments, portfolios, essays and dissertations.

Examples of plagiarism in such a context would include:

- Directly copying from written physical, pictorial or written material, without crediting the source;
- Paraphrasing someone else's work, without crediting the source;

Examples of other forms of academic misconduct (such as cheating, collusion and attempting to obtain an unfair academic advantage) would include:

- Getting someone else to produce part or all of the work submitted;
- Colluding with one or more learner(s) to produce a piece of work and submitting it individually as one's own;
- Copying the work of another learner, with or without their permission;
- Knowingly allowing another learner to copy one's own work;
- Resubmitting one's own previously graded work;
- Using forbidden notes or books in producing assigned work or tests;
- Fabrication of results (including experiments, research, interviews, observations).
- Use of AI tools to write coursework, assignments, assessments portfolios, essays and dissertations.

The use of the word “academic” in the title seeks to define the scope of policy as it relates to the delivery and assessment of the curriculum. It is intended to include vocational courses and all assessed programmes.

3 College Academic Misconduct Policy – Action to be taken by staff

Plagiarism, cheating and collusion and attempting to obtain an unfair academic advantage are entirely unacceptable and not allowed. As such, these forms of academic misconduct will be subject to disciplinary regulations.

To prevent the occurrence of academic misconduct, staff should:

- Provide learners with guidance on the format of formal acknowledgement of source material and the use of ‘Cite them Right’ as the college standard.
- Inform learners clearly of the plagiarism policy and guidelines on academic misconduct early in the course.
- Include statements on academic misconduct in course handbooks and the student handbook and ensuring consistency throughout the College.
- Make learners aware of the penalties for academic misconduct at the earliest stage of the course.
- Inform learners, in writing, if possible, of the extent to which they can collaborate in coursework. Please refer to any guidelines from awarding bodies as to what is, and is not, allowed when collaborating.
- Be aware that most learners are very computer literate and can scan text and surf the web for model essays, etc., with ease. Ensure adequate access controls are in place and that students are supervised when using computers (especially when networked) to prevent learners from copying or printing out other people’s work as part of their own.
- Devise procedures for assessing work in such a way that plagiarism, cheating and collusion are more detectable. This might include – ensuring that coursework assessment is supported by unseen and supervised work under test conditions, changing assignment topics yearly, on at least a three-yearly cycle; making less use of generic assignments in favour of tailored assignments; getting to know the style of learners’ writing/submissions early in the course; comparing subsequent work to initial assessment tests. Ideally, mark/assess a class group’s coursework on a single occasion, to enhance the likelihood of the assessor spotting plagiarised passages.
- Use ‘Turnitin’ or ‘Google’ to check work submitted for assessment where appropriate.
- Fully investigate all instances of suspected academic misconduct utilising the proper disciplinary procedures

4 Types of plagiarism

Procedure to deal with plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will vary according to the type of case. For minor cases, the person carrying out the procedure will usually be the subject teacher. If moderate or severe cases are suspected, then the procedure should be carried out by the Curriculum Team Leader and escalated to the Curriculum Manager if necessary.

Different types of cases are set out in the examples below.

Examples of minor cases could include a learner:

- Receiving undue help in good faith because instructions have been misunderstood.
- Copying a couple of sentences or using part of someone else’s diagrams.
- Copying small amounts of text from books without direct acknowledgement, but which does not make a significant contribution to the overall work
- Downloading small amounts from the internet without acknowledgement
- Using ideas or part of another’s artwork without acknowledgement
- Not referencing work properly.
- Failing to acknowledge the source of a small section of an assignment.

- Infringing the policy when the assessed work does not contribute to final grade.

Examples of moderate cases could include:

- Copying from books without acknowledgement which has the effect of making a significant contribution to the overall work
- Limited plagiarism from professional work (not course books).
- Limited copying of other candidates' work or excessive help within one piece of work.
- Limited downloading of information from the internet
- The use of model answers downloaded from the internet
- Infringing the policy when the assessed work contributes to final grade.
- Repeated minor cases.

Examples of serious cases could include:

- Extensive copying of textbooks in one piece of work or limited copying in two or more pieces of work which makes a significant contribution to the work/s.
- Extensive plagiarism of professional works (more than 100 words)
- Use of AI tools to write coursework, assignments, assessments portfolios, essays and dissertations
- Buying, selling or stealing of work.
- Repeated evidence of extensive use of information from the internet without acknowledgement
- Using model internet answers
- Using past candidates' work from previous years.
- Undue help from outside of the centre.
- Repeated moderate cases.

The allegations against the learner should be provided to the learner in writing before any action is taken, so that the learner is clear of the case to be answered.

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5 Procedure to deal with plagiarism

5.1 Action to be taken by staff if plagiarism is believed to be proven beyond reasonable doubt with direct reference to the parent text or other evidence, and/or is admitted by student.

If the student admits misconduct:

- Arrange a meeting with the student to hear his/her comments. The investigating member of staff determines the level of seriousness of the incident and considers the appropriate action.

In all cases of misconduct, the member of staff should:

- Notify the awarding organisation, in line with their procedures
- Inform external examiners/verifiers in line with awarding organisation's procedures
- JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) guidelines state that: "Centres should not normally give credit for any work submitted which is not the candidate's own work." Therefore, a mark should not be awarded for plagiarised work.

5.1.1 If a minor case is identified, the member of staff may choose one or more of the following at their discretion -

- Discuss the incident with the learner
- Warn the learner about future conduct
- Allow the learner to re-sit an exam/test or resubmit an assessed piece of work if this is allowed by the awarding body's procedures

- If this is not the first instance, refer directly to a second stage interview

5.1.2 If a moderate case is identified, staff may elect to -

- Withdraw the right of the learner to re-sit an exam/test or resubmit an assessed piece of work
- Refer the case immediately to a second stage interview (at the discretion of the investigating member of staff). This will be with the Curriculum Team Leader who will recommend an appropriate sanction.

5.1.3 If a serious case is identified, staff are entitled to -

- Withdraw the right of the learner to re-sit the exam or test or withdraw the right to resubmit work for assessment.
- Disqualify the learner from the course

In all cases, a note of the allegation, outcome and action taken should be recorded on the student's file as a disciplinary incident.

5.2 Action by staff, if academic misconduct is not proven yet still suspected, or if the misconduct is proven, yet not admitted by the student, will need to investigate, as described below.

5.2.1 If a minor case is alleged

The student attends a 1st Stage Interview process:

- Interview will be chaired by the relevant teacher/s and the student.
- Written notice of the nature of interview and allegations should be sent to the learner prior to the interview, notifying the individual that he/she can bring a friend, relative or a student council representative.
- The incident is discussed with the student, with the evidence and location within the student's work identified.
- The student is questioned, to test knowledge of the work.
- The student has an opportunity to explain.
- The teacher/s listens to the case carefully and decides.

5.2.2 Possible outcomes

- No academic misconduct has taken place and the assignment remains marked as it stands
- The student denies academic misconduct has occurred and a second stage interview is necessary
- Academic misconduct is found to have taken place, and the college informs the awarding organisation, in line with their procedures (see Section 5.1)

5.2.3 If a moderate case is alleged

The student attends a 1st Stage Interview as set out above in Section 5.2.1

5.2.4 Possible outcomes

- No academic misconduct has taken place and the assignment remains marked as it stands.
- The student accepts that academic misconduct has taken place and, according to the circumstances, may be referred by the tutor to a second stage interview with the Curriculum Team Leader who will recommend an appropriate sanction.
- The student denies academic misconduct has occurred. A second stage interview is required
- Academic misconduct is found to have taken place, and the college informs the awarding organisation, in line with their procedures (see Section 5.1)

5.2.5 If a serious case is alleged

The student attends a 1st Stage Interview as set out above in Section 5.2.1 but this should be chaired by the Curriculum Team Leader

5.2.6 Possible outcomes

- No academic misconduct has taken place and the assignment remains marked as it stands.
- The learner denies academic misconduct has occurred and a second stage interview is required.
- The learner accepts that academic misconduct has taken place and is referred to a second stage interview with the Curriculum Manager who will recommend an appropriate sanction.
- Academic misconduct is found to have taken place, and a zero grade in the exam/test module is given, or the assessed work is not awarded a grade. A re-sit or resubmission of coursework is not allowed.
- Academic misconduct is found to have taken place, and the college informs the awarding body, in line with their procedures (see Section 5.1)

In all cases where plagiarism is confirmed, a note of the allegation/s, outcome and action taken should be recorded on the student's file as a disciplinary incident.

5.2.7 2nd Stage Interview – the process

- Chaired by Curriculum Manager and attended by Course Team Leader, assessing teacher and the student.
- Written notice is sent to the learner stating the allegations, a summary of the evidence, the time and place and possible outcomes, and allowing them to bring a friend, relative or student council representative.
- Copies of any documents, which will be considered or relied upon by any of the parties, should be disclosed to the learner with the written notice if possible but in any event at least five working days before the interview
- A formal record of the interview is made, with the assessing teacher presenting the case and allegations of academic misconduct.
- The learner states their case.
- The Curriculum Manager or other member of staff as appropriate questions the learner to determine how the learner went about producing this piece of work and how they used references or other sources of support.
- The Curriculum Manager reaches a decision.

5.2.8 Possible Outcomes

- No academic misconduct has taken place and the assignment is marked as it stands.
- The course tutor's decision is upheld, and the work is assigned a zero mark. The Curriculum Manager will recommend an appropriate sanction (section 5.1)
- If academic misconduct is found to have taken place, the awarding body is informed, and will decide whether to proceed with any further sanctions against the student.

In all cases where plagiarism is confirmed, a note of the allegation/s, outcome and action taken should be recorded on the student's file as a disciplinary incident.

6 Penalties

At any stage in the procedures when the College imposes a penalty of any kind in respect of an allegation of academic misconduct (save in respect of minor cases), the College will provide written reasons for its decision to the learner within 7 days if reasonably practicable considering all the circumstances.

7 Review

This policy will be periodically monitored in light of legislative, regulatory, codifiable of necessary changes, and in any event formally reviewed, and revised if necessary, on an annual basis in July/August.