



Plagiarism, Collusion & Cheating Policy

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1. Introduction

The college recognises that student achievement must be based on robust, fair assessment and verification activities. When students achieve at Milton Keynes college stakeholders should be confident in the credibility of these achievements. It is vital that students and staff share a consistent understanding regarding what constitutes potential plagiarism, collusion and cheating and the potential consequences of such malpractice.

The college expectation is that all staff have the expertise to make fair and consistent grading decisions for all learners when assessing and moderating assessment decisions. The policy requires active commitment from all staff assessing on all programmes to validate that learner work is original and to take consistent action when plagiarism, collusion or cheating is suspected.

This policy has been developed to reflect current JCQ guidance and been informed by consideration of a number of Awarding Body policy documents.

2. Policy Statement

The aim of this policy is to ensure consistency and fairness when dealing with potential plagiarism, collusion and cheating. This policy aims to ensure:

- The assessment process is valid, rigorous and reliable;
- Learner work that is accepted for assessment is original to that learner;
- Learners have an understanding of what plagiarism, collusion and cheating are and how these are relevant to them;
- A consistent approach when dealing with potential cases of plagiarism, collusion or cheating;
- Support and to enable learner success;
- The assessment and investigation processes meet the requirements of relevant Awarding Bodies.

3. Content

3.1 What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is a form of cheating and is classed as academic misconduct. If a learner is found to have plagiarised then they have committed a serious academic offence.

Plagiarism comes in many forms but ultimately means attempting to pass off someone else's work or ideas as the learner's own. The most common forms are:

- Copying another learner's work (past or present);
- Copying or paraphrasing from textbooks, journals or magazines;
- Cut/copy and pasted material from the Web;
- Copying course material or lecture notes;

- Using diagrams, images or course notes without acknowledgement of their source
- The misuse of sources outside the College;
- Employment of a professional ghostwriting individual or company or anyone else to produce work for the learner.

Plagiarism does not just occur with written work but can occur with work produced in any form. Regardless of the format, the key is proper attribution of source material. Plagiarism is wrong because it is fundamentally dishonest and contravenes Awarding Body requirements. If undetected, it can provide learners with an unfair advantage over others in the group and it devalues the qualification being sought.

3.2 Why does plagiarism happen?

Changing the words of an original source is not sufficient to prevent plagiarism. If the essential idea of an original source has been retained, and it has not been correctly referenced or acknowledged, then no matter how drastically its context or presentation has been altered, it has still been plagiarised. Plagiarism can be prevented by providing a reference which attributes the work to the correct source, regardless of the form that this work takes.

There are two main types of plagiarism – intentional and unintentional. The list below is not exhaustive but contains the most commonly encountered reasons for plagiarism:

Typical unintentional reasons for plagiarism:

- Misunderstanding about using a quote, or extract from a source and how to reference correctly;
- Over-reliance on original source material;
- Following practices encouraged or accepted in previous educational experience or culture;
- Not understanding what is meant by plagiarism if it has not been explained;
- Not fully understanding where group work ceases and individual work begins;
- Compensating for poor English language skills;
- Poor note-taking practice;
- Not understanding the concept of individual ownership of ideas;
- Being unclear about the ownership of electronic or web based material;
- Being unable to distinguish between intellectual property rights and common knowledge;
- Lacking referencing skills so being unable to record and acknowledge sources correctly;
- Lacking effective study or research skills;
- Not knowing how to adapt published information so that it does not require referencing.
- The direct and unacknowledged translation of foreign language texts into English.

Typical intentional reasons for plagiarism:

- Not believing that plagiarism is wrong;
- Regarding academic regulations as unimportant or irrelevant;
- Regarding plagiarism as a short cut to success;
- Intentional cheating and passing off of another's work for one's own ends.

Whilst the majority of plagiarism is committed unintentionally, this does not reduce the seriousness of the offence or provide an excuse, for this as a form of academic misconduct. It is the responsibility of the learner to ensure they have met all the requirements of correct referencing and citation and sufficient acknowledgment of source material.

3.3 How is plagiarism identified?

Assessors provide the best safeguard against plagiarism, and additionally through the use of electronic detection systems e.g. Turnitin. Indicators to an assessor or internal quality assurer (IQA) of potential plagiarism could include:

- Assignments that contain unfamiliar words;
- A written style of a far higher standard than that demonstrated previously;
- An unexpected rise in the quality and accuracy of work;
- Use of texts familiar to the assessor but not referenced;
- Use of American spelling or unfamiliar terminology;
- Differences in the level of performance between assignments and activity completed under uncontrolled conditions;
- Learner being unable to explain what they have written about when questioned;
- Changes in the font, text size or colour during a piece of written work.

3.4 What Cheating and Collusion?

Cheating is an attempt to deceive College/Awarding Body assessors, examiners and/or external verifiers and includes:

- Providing or receiving information about the content of an examination before it takes place, except when allowed by the Awarding Body (e.g. case study materials issued before an examination)
- College staff giving excessive help to learners in writing an assignment, or writing any of it for them
- Someone impersonating or trying to impersonate a learner, or attempting to procure a third party to impersonate oneself
- Learners using books, notes, instruments, computer files or other materials or aids that are not permitted (usually relevant only to examinations and online tests)

- Assistance, or the communication of information, by one learner to another in an assessment where this is not permitted (usually relevant only to examinations and online tests)
- Copying or reading from the work of another learner or from another learner's books, notes, instruments, computer files or other materials or aids
- Offering a bribe of any kind to an invigilator, examiner or other person connected with assessment
- Any attempt to tamper with assignment or examination scripts after they have been submitted by learners
- Staff fabricating or falsifying data or results by individual learners or groups of learners.

Because of the nature of cheating, this mainly applies to examinations and online tests.

Examples of collusion and cheating include but are not limited to:

- Presenting group work within assessments without acknowledgement of the source
- Use of diagrams and/or images without acknowledgement of the source
- Taking notes into an examination, unless it is an open book examination
- Impersonation
- Offering a bribe of any kind to an invigilator, a member of centre staff or Awarding Body staff
- Obtaining or attempting to obtain secure/assessment material
- Submission of work purchased from a third party. For example, from an essay or assignment writing service
- Introduction of unauthorised material into the examination room
- Disruptive, violent or offensive behaviour
- Any form of communication with other learners during an examination (written, verbal, gestures, expressions, pointing etc.)
- Failure to abide by the instructions of an invigilator or supervisor
- Copying others answers during an examination.

Milton Keynes College appreciates in some circumstances learners may work together on projects, however we expect learners to write up the assignment individually and reflect on their own learning from completion of the joint project. Any materials shared within the project must be acknowledged in order to avoid plagiarism and where possible content should be created independently to avoid this occurring.

Milton Keynes College also acknowledges that cheating may involve a member of staff (e.g. tampering with assessment or examination scripts or results after learners have submitted them), which would be a case of malpractice. In such an instance the suspected malpractice will be reported to the relevant Awarding Body an investigation will take place in accordance with the Awarding Body guidelines and the College Malpractice & Maladministration Policy and Procedure.

3.5 Procedure for dealing with suspected student plagiarism, collusion and cheating

JCQ guidance recognises that centres can resolve the matter themselves prior to the signing of the declarations. Where plagiarism, collusion or cheating is suspected **PRIOR TO THE DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICATION BEING SIGNED** the following steps will be taken:

- The assessor will first seek to confirm the authenticity of the work by asking the learner questions to verify their knowledge or by seeking to identify original source materials by using search engines or referring to textbooks;
- If these investigations confirm that plagiarism, collusion or cheating has occurred, the assessed work will be referred back to the learner potentially for revision;
- Where plagiarism, collusion or cheating is believed to have occurred as a result of poor academic skills, the assessor will also provide further support in the development of appropriate skills. This could include referring the learner to additional support mechanisms.
- Teachers must not accept work which is not the candidate's own.
- Instances of deliberate plagiarism, collusion or cheating by an individual will result in work not being accepted for assessment and appropriate action will be taken in line with the learner disciplinary procedures

Learners may appeal against decisions made. Appeals should be made to the IQA in the first instance. The IQA will consider the evidence provided by both the learner and the assessor. The IQA will then either confirm the original identification of plagiarism, collusion/cheating or re-instate the learner's right to assessment.

Where the IQA is unable to form a judgement based on the evidence presented, the matter may be referred to the Lead IQA or the Assistant Principal- Quality & Student Experience. This decision will be final.

Ultimately the Head of Centre has the responsibility for ensuring that candidates do not submit plagiarised work. **IF PLAGIARISM, COLLUSION OR CHEATING ARE DETECTED BY THE CENTRE AND THE DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICATION HAS BEEN SIGNED, THE CASE MUST BE REPORTED TO THE AWARDING BODY FOLLOWING THEIR PROCEDURES.**

The procedures for reporting the suspected / confirmed plagiarism are detailed in the Awarding Body Standards Guidelines, the JCQ Guidance for Dealing with Instances of Suspected Malpractice in Examinations; and the ILM Plagiarism, Collusion & Cheating Policy and Investigations Guidance.

The Awarding Body will then consider the case and, if necessary, impose a sanction in line with the relevant guidance. The sanctions applied to a candidate committing plagiarism can range from a warning regarding future conduct to the candidate being barred from entering for one or more examinations for a set period of time.

If plagiarism is suspected by an Awarding Body moderator or examiner, or has been reported by a candidate or member of the public, full details of the allegation will be reported to the college. The Head of Centre (or a delegated Senior Manager) will conduct an investigation into the alleged malpractice and submit a written report to the relevant Awarding Body.

3.6 This policy cross references with the following documents:

- Relevant Awarding Body Standards Guidelines
- JCQ Suspected Malpractice in Examinations
- ILM Plagiarism, Collusion & Cheating Policy
- ILM Investigations Guidance
- Malpractice & Maladministration Procedure
- Academic Appeals Policy
- Assessment and IQA Policy
- Professional Standards for Teachers
- Complaints Policy and Procedures
- Student Disciplinary Policy

Copies of all college documents can be obtained by accessing the Assessment & IQA Sharepoint page within the staff intranet.