

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to define 'academic misconduct' 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.

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 four of the Strategic Pillars in our College Strategic Plan: Student Experience; Teaching, Learning and Assessment; Curriculum; and, Learning Environment and Sustainability.

2. SCOPE

The Academic Misconduct 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. 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. The College will discharge its duty in relation to internally assessed summative assessment but will always defer to Awarding Organisation regulations to ensure that assessments conducted at the College are rigorous, reliable and secure.

Similarly, for HE students this policy needs to be read alongside the College's partner Higher Education academic regulations and the regulations of the relevant provider.

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.

Overall strategic responsibility for this policy lies with the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement. 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. **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 appropriate Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (for both HE and FE)
 - c) Any alleged misconduct during an examination, or externally assessed activity, will be recorded on the invigilator's report form, which is given to the Examinations Manager who will report the alleged misconduct to the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement.
 - d) The College will conduct a fair and objective investigation into the allegations of academic dishonesty.
 - 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 Head of IT and MIS and the Head of Centre (The Principal and Chief Executive).
- b) The procedure for suspected academic misconduct 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 in Further Education for internal assessment should adhere to the guidance outlined in Suspected Academic Misconduct: Internal Assessment Process for FE.
- d) At HE, students are invited to Student Facing Panel to present their version of events regarding any suspected academic malpractice all are equal in this panel. If a student disputes the outcome of this panel, they are able to appeal and a different staff member will review the case.

4. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

The Director of Quality Innovation was consulted in the revision of this policy, which was last revised in July 2022. This policy refers to the statutory responsibility of the College to meet the requirements of external awarding and examining bodies both FE and HE with regard to the behaviour of students undertaking examinations and summative assessments.

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

7. MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The Heads of Quality Assurance and Enhancement is responsible for ensuring the Academic Misconduct 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 (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. Section 3.1 outlines the equality in practice during the investigation process.

Author:	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement
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