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Academic Misconduct Policy

Revision History

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Academic Misconduct Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. Definition

NCC Education defines **Academic Misconduct** as malpractice committed by a candidate during the course of any assessment, including both those completed in controlled environments and coursework. It may also be termed **Candidate Malpractice**. Definitions of most common types of Academic Misconduct are listed in the table in Section 2 of this document.

1.2. Summary

All work submitted for an assessment must be the candidate's own work. It is an offence for any candidate to be guilty of, or party to, collusion, plagiarism, misuse of AI or any other act which may mislead the examiners and moderators about the development and authorship of work presented in assessments. This includes misleading examiners and moderators about the sources of information included in an assessment.

All academic writing must fully acknowledge all sources of information used in preparing the work being submitted. This includes acknowledging all written and electronic sources. For all NCC Education qualifications, candidates **MUST** use Harvard-style referencing standards. Where work is produced under examination conditions it is sufficient to acknowledge the source without providing a full reference.

For detailed guidance on the correct procedures for maintaining the security and integrity of examinations, Centres should consult NCC Education's Instructions for Conducting Examinations document. However, candidates should be aware of the following requirements:

Candidates must not take any means of accessing information into an examination room, unless the rubric for that examination explicitly states that this is allowed. This includes:

- all internet-connected devices – computers, tablets, smart watches, etc.
- mobile phones, pagers or other messaging devices
- books, journals, or notes.

Where it is absolutely necessary to take any such materials into the room, they must be left with the invigilator (and, if an electronic device, switched off) prior to the exam commencing.

Unless explicitly permitted and/or required in the specification or an assessment itself, candidates must always work alone on preparing their assessments.

1.3. Scope of policy

This policy document applies to the following NCC Education qualifications:

- Level 2 Award in Computing
- Level 2 Diploma in Computing
- Level 2 Award in Business
- Level 2 Certificate in Business
- Level 2 Diploma in Business

- Level 3 International Foundation Diploma for Higher Education Studies
- Level 3 Diploma in Computing
- Level 3 Award in Business
- Level 3 Certificate in Business
- Level 3 Diploma in Business
- Level 3 Extended Diploma in Business
- Level 4 Diploma in Computing
- Level 4 Diploma in Computing (with Business Management)
- Level 4 Diploma in Business
- Level 5 Diploma in Computing
- Level 5 Diploma in Computing (with Business Management)
- Level 5 Diploma in Computing (with Cyber Security)
- Level 5 Diploma in Computing (with Data Science)
- Level 5 Diploma in Business
- Level 7 Diploma in Business Management
- International Pre-Master's in Business
- Pre-Master's in Business

2. Types of Academic Misconduct

Collusion	The preparation or production of work for assessment jointly with another person or persons. The only exception to this is when group work is explicitly permitted by the specification and/or assessment guidance). An act of collusion is understood to encompass those who actively assist others as well as those who derive benefit from others. Where joint preparation is permitted but joint production is not, the submitted work must be produced solely by the candidate making the submission. Where joint production or joint preparation and production of work for assessment is specifically permitted, this will be published in the appropriate assessment rubrics.
Plagiarism	The use, without acknowledgement, of the intellectual work of others, and the act of representing the ideas or discoveries of another as one's own in written work submitted for assessment. To use AI to answer questions, copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content, copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content, failing to acknowledge use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information, incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools and submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies To copy sentences, phrases or even striking expressions without acknowledgement of the source (either by inadequate citation or failure to indicate verbatim quotations) is plagiarism. To paraphrase without acknowledgement is also plagiarism. Direct quotations must be either in quotation marks, or indented, and directly acknowledged. The failure to correctly reference the work of others is deemed to be plagiarism regardless of whether occurs intentionally or through ignorance of referencing requirements.
Impersonation	Occurs where someone other than the candidate prepares the work submitted for assessment. This includes purchasing or commissioning

	essays from third parties (including essay writing websites and other students) or asking someone else to sit an examination. Candidates who attend an examination without their student ID card or other acceptable form of photo-ID will not have their script marked until their identity has been confirmed.
Exam Misconduct	Includes having access, or attempting to gain access, to any books, websites, networks, memoranda, notes, unauthorised calculators, or any other material which has not been supplied by the invigilator or authorised in the rubric on the front of the examination paper. It also includes aiding or attempting to aid another candidate, or obtaining or attempting to obtain aid from another candidate, or any other communication within the Examination Room.
Fabrication of results or observations	The reporting of artificial data from practical activities carried out by the candidate, or the use of artificial observations to support a hypothesis/conclusion.

NCC Education deems all instances of academic misconduct as serious failures to respect the integrity and fairness of the assessment process.

2.1. Poor Academic Practice

Poor Academic Practice is the term used by NCC Education to describe circumstances in which a candidate is judged to have committed Academic Misconduct, but either through extenuating circumstances or a lack of severity it is not easily classifiable under any of the types of misconduct listed above. In cases of Poor Academic Practice, a more severe penalty is deemed inappropriate, and therefore NCC Education may decide to instead issue a warning, or to cap the candidate's mark at the pass boundary (40).

In order to differentiate between Poor Academic Practice and Academic Misconduct as defined in Section 2, any person(s) investigating must be satisfied that there was no intention to deliberately mislead the markers and moderators, or to knowingly present someone else's intellectual property as the candidate's own work. There **must also be some attempt to reference correctly using Harvard-style referencing standards** and the **vast majority of the candidate's work must be their own work**. Where a candidate fails to reference throughout an entire assignment, this is always deemed to be Plagiarism, even where unintentional and/or due to lack of understanding of referencing requirements.

2.2. Self-plagiarism

NCC Education accepts that candidates may sometimes wish to re-use identical or nearly identical parts of their own previous work. This practice is acceptable, however when re-using content from their own previous work **for which credit has been awarded**, it is important that candidates always acknowledge the origin of this content as they would when citing any other sources.

3. Investigation of Academic Misconduct by NCC Education

Allegations of Academic Misconduct may be raised by Centres (see Section 4 below), by NCC Education markers and moderators, or by whistleblowing. NCC Education will investigate all allegations of Academic Misconduct.

For assignments marked centrally by NCC Education, all candidate assignments are uploaded to approved Plagiarism and AI detection software to return an originality report. These are reviewed internally prior to any penalty being recommended to the Assessment Board.

NCC Education review all available evidence in order to establish if Academic Misconduct has occurred. Where an allegation of Academic Misconduct is supported by the evidence, NCC Education must establish whether the issue is confined to one candidate's work or is more prevalent in the cohort. In order to establish this, NCC Education may need to request a further sample of locally marked work from the Centre, up to and including submission of the full cohort, or may require the Centre to re-check the cohort for evidence of Academic Misconduct.

In some cases, Centres may be required to interview candidates as part of the investigation process. In such cases, NCC Education will write to the Head of Centre setting out exactly what information is required. Centres are expected to comply with any such requests in a prompt manner, and failure to comply with any requests as part of an investigation will be deemed to be Malpractice on the Centre's part, as defined in NCC Education's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy. Candidates are also expected to comply fully with any investigation.

NCC Education holds the right to withhold marks as appropriate beyond the published results release date pending the outcome of any investigation into alleged Academic Misconduct.

Once an investigation is complete, all penalties are communicated to candidates in a Candidate Academic Misconduct Report. The candidate is entitled to challenge this decision by requesting a Post-Results Service, as outlined in NCC Education's published *Post-Results Services Process*.

While Academic Misconduct investigations usually take place in the period leading to results release, there is no time limit on investigations and the application of appropriate penalties where evidence of Academic Misconduct is present. NCC Education holds the right to rescind an award if evidence of Academic Misconduct arises at a later date.

4. Academic Misconduct Identified by Centres

4.1. In Examinations:

Cheating during an examination **MUST** be recorded by the Chief Invigilator in an Irregularities Report, as well as the Chief Invigilator Report (see *Instructions for Conducting Examinations* for more information and copies of these reports). This report must be submitted along with the candidate's script for marking (for Global Examinations) or with the sample for moderation (for Local Examinations). The centre **MUST** also contact NCC Education's Quality Assurance Department via email on quality2@nccedu.com to confirm and share the details of malpractice/misconduct/cheating (or attempted malpractice/misconduct/cheating) committed during the examination.

4.2. In Assignments:

All assignments marked by Centre markers must be uploaded to approved Plagiarism and AI detection software to obtain an Originality Report, and these reports reviewed for plagiarism and/or collusion by Centre markers.

If impersonation is suspected, then an interview should be arranged with the candidate. The candidate should be clearly informed of the allegation against them when the interview is arranged. At the interview, the candidate should be asked to explain key parts of their assignment. Candidates unable to explain concepts from their own submission, or simply repeating the contents of their assignment verbatim, should be considered evidence supporting the allegation of impersonation. Should a candidate fail to attend the interview or refuse to answer questions, this will be interpreted as the candidate not wishing to challenge the allegation.

If a Centre marker uncovers any form of academic misconduct in assignments submitted by candidates, penalties must be applied as set out in Section 5 below. Candidates are not permitted to work in groups unless explicitly stated in the rubric for an assessment. Any candidates whose work show an inappropriate level of similarity should have their marks reduced. If a candidate willingly permits a fellow candidate to access and copy their work, both candidates should be penalised.

4.3. Submitting Global Assignment and Local Examination samples for moderation:

When submitting Global Assignment and/or Local Examination samples to NCC Education for moderation, the centre **MUST** send in the required sample by default and also check for and include all other cases where misconduct is identified. In any cases where the centre identifies academic misconduct, the centre **MUST** ensure that the penalty applied is clearly recorded on the sample.

For Local Examinations, any malpractice/misconduct/cheating (or attempted malpractice/misconduct/cheating) during the examination **MUST** be recorded by the Chief Invigilator in an Irregularities Report, as well as in the Chief Invigilator's Report. These reports and the examination script must be submitted with the sample for moderation.

The centre **MUST** also ensure that it reports all details of such cases in the sample submission/moderation workflow on the NCC Education QuartzWeb Portal when submitting as part of the Misconduct/AI questions in the workflow. The details required include:

- The candidate's full name (as they are registered/enrolled with NCC Education) and their NCC Education ID (this is 6 numbers long – previously it included the prefix 'P00', but this is no longer used).
- Details of the identified academic misconduct – for example, the approved Plagiarism and AI detection software report's plagiarism similarity index percentage, the approved Plagiarism and AI detection software report's AI percentage, specific details of misconduct – for example, for a Local Examination, this could include details such as a candidate being discovered with a mobile phone, collusion (or attempted collusion) that was seen by an invigilator during the examination, as well as any other forms of malpractice or attempted malpractice observed.
- The penalty the centre has applied to the candidate in line with Section 5 of this Policy.

4.4. Guidance on reviewing approved Plagiarism and AI detection software reports

Although approved Plagiarism and AI detection software reports give percentage scores for plagiarism, they do require careful interpretation before a penalty is applied. For example, a similarity score of 40% could mean that half of the work is identical to a single other source – which would be clear misconduct. However, it could mean that 40% of the assignment is made up of quotations from 10 different academic sources, and if they are all correctly referenced (and the remaining half of the assignment is original work) then the submission may well be excellent.

There may also be a “background score” consideration in plagiarism reports. This is caused by text which is shared between many different candidates’ assignments – for example, the wording of the Statement of Confirmation of Own Work, unit names, assignment tasks, etc. A typical background score, which can be ignored, is between 20 and 25% for most NCC Education candidates. This is slightly higher (around 35-40%) for computer programming assignments, where legitimate strings of code will also generate matches.

4.5. Turnitin - AI Writing Detection Tool

Turnitin has added an AI writing indicator that has been added to the Similarity Report will show an overall percentage of the document that may have been AI-generated. The AI writing report contains the overall percentage of prose sentences contained in a long-form writing format within the submitted document that Turnitin’s model determines was generated by AI. These sentences are highlighted in blue on the submission text in the AI writing report.

The percentage, generated by Turnitin’s AI writing detection model, is different and independent from the similarity score, and the AI writing highlights are not visible in the Similarity Report.

Turnitin’s AI writing detection model only highlights text that is highly likely to be AI-generated. This is to help ensure that students are treated fairly whilst safeguarding the institution’s academic integrity standards.

NCC Education must stress that the percentage is interpretive and should not be used as a definitive measure of misconduct or disciplinary tool. Centres should use this indicative percentage to help them decide how to best handle work that may have been produced or partially produced by AI writing tools.

For AI misuse and Turnitin Detection please refer to the Turnitin FAQs in using the detection feature : <https://www.turnitin.com/products/features/ai-writing-detection> as well as NCC Education *AI Use in Assessments guide*.

Centres must report any **AI generated** content percentage **over 40%** through the plagiarism survey in the sample submission/moderation workflow on the NCC Education QuartzWeb Portal when submitting as part of the Misconduct/AI questions in the workflow. The centre must then formatively investigate this and provide details and actions taken via the NCC Education QuartzWeb Portal when submitting samples for moderation. Example below:

Sample Selection for Screenshot College (Test Centre) - Study and Presentation Skills GA (V1) - Winter 2025 (575074)

Q2a): AI Generated content (i.e. the AI Generated content percentage on the Turnitin Report is 40% or over) was detected?

Progress (Steps/Actions) 2

No - no AI detected

Yes - AI detected

Yes - AI detected

X

Q2b): For each instance of academic misconduct relating to AI please provide details in the following format: Candidate Name and number - brief description of AI misconduct - Action taken. Please use a separate line for each instance/description.

For example:

John Smith P00122234 - high percentage showing on Turnitin Report for AI Generated content, with overall AI percentage at 79% for assignment - lecturer had a meeting with the candidate who admitted to using AI tool without referencing they had done so in assignment, mark for assignment set to zero.

Kate Jones P00273641 - Student had high AI Generated content percentage of 41% showing on Turnitin Report throughout their assignment - lecturer met and spoke with candidate. Candidate claimed they did not use AI tools - Mark for assignment remains as it was marked but this is being reported here as the AI Generated content percentage was over the threshold of 40% and so that NCC Education can carry out any further investigations if required.

Once confirmed please select '**Q2 Detail Provided**' to confirm all evidence has been submitted.

Notes:

B	I	U	S	X₁	X¹							
Type something								0				

Submit / Confirm

NCC Education will also investigate this and, as per our *Malpractice and Maladministration policy*, ask for further evidence of actions taken if required.

For **all** identified or any suspicions that AI generation has been used by any student, centres should follow NCC Education's *Malpractice and Maladministration Policy*.

5. Sanctions

The following is a list of Sanctions which NCC Education may impose on candidates where evidence suggests that Academic Misconduct has occurred:

1. Warning

Marks are not reduced, but the candidate is issued with a warning against repeating their actions at future assessment cycles, with further escalated sanctions likely to be applied in this event.

2. Mark capped at 40 (pass mark)

Marks are reduced to 40, allowing the candidate to pass the assessment component but limiting them from achieving a merit or distinction grade.

3. Loss of all marks for a specific task of assignment

Where Academic Misconduct is identified in only one particular task of an assignment, the marks for that task may be set to zero. Where plagiarism is found in isolated tasks, but the combined marks for those tasks make up 50% or more of the total available marks in the assessment, the mark for the whole assessment component must be set to zero.

This penalty is not applicable to examinations, as any evidence of academic misconduct in an exam is a breach of the conditions under which a controlled assessment must be sat, and therefore affects all questions answered.

4. Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component

Where Academic Misconduct is identified throughout a particular assessment component (or individual tasks making up 50% or more of the assessment), the marks for that assessment component will be set to zero.

5. Loss of all marks for a Unit

Where Academic Misconduct is identified in the same Unit at consecutive assessment cycles, the marks for **all assessment components** for the unit may be set to zero.

6. Disqualification from a Qualification

Where severe or repeated Academic Misconduct has been identified, a candidate may be disqualified from a qualification for a period of time. The candidate would then be required to re-register on the qualification, though credit could be transferred from the first attempt at the qualification (subject to the rules laid out in NCC Education's Academic Regulations). NCC Education reserves the right to extend disqualification to all NCC Education qualifications. Any decisions to disqualify candidates from a qualification are at the discretion of the Director of Quality, Academics and Development.

The table below demonstrates the appropriate penalty to be applied according to the type of offence committed by the candidate. This is not an exhaustive list - NCC Education retains the right to impose penalties as appropriate on a case-by-case basis - but includes the most common types of offences identified and penalised by NCC Education.

Type of offence	Penalty
Bringing unauthorised materials into the exam room	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component

Attempting to communicate with others in an exam, disruptive behaviour, etc.	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Copying from or allowing another candidate to copy from you during an exam	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Directly quoting text from NCC Education learning materials without appropriate referencing (Not applicable to Examinations)	Warning
Self-plagiarism, i.e. reusing content from the candidate's own previous work for which credit has been awarded without appropriate acknowledgement of the source.	Warning
Evidence of collusion in the work of two or more candidates from the same cohort, with evidence of collusion present in all or the majority of tasks (making up more than 50% of the total mark) in the assessment.	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Evidence of collusion in the work of two or more candidates from the same cohort, with evidence of collusion present in only certain tasks in the assessment (making up less than 50% of total mark).	Loss of all marks for a specific task of assignment
Isolated examples of plagiarism (in assignments): - Plagiarised text is generic in nature, e.g. definitions, common phrases - Plagiarised text is in key parts of the assignment which should always be the candidate's own work. - Where plagiarism is found in isolated tasks, but the marks for those tasks make up 50% or more of the total marks available in the assessment.	Mark capped at 40 / Warning (where original mark is less than 40) Loss of all marks for a specific task of assignment Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Poor referencing in assignments, e.g. citation of sources is attempted but inconsistent, or fails to use Harvard style. - Where poor referencing leads to small amounts of plagiarism occurring - Where referencing is poor, but no evidence of any significant plagiarised content	Mark capped at 40 / Warning (where original mark is less than 40) Warning
Consistent failure to reference throughout an assessment resulting in severe plagiarism.	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component

Commissioning/attempting to commission others to write assessment on the candidate's behalf (impersonation)	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Falsification/alteration of results/data presented in an assessment	Loss of all marks for an entire assessment component
Repeated academic misconduct in same unit at two assessment cycles (do not need to be sequential)	Loss of all marks for a Unit
Repeated academic misconduct in any units at three or more assessment cycles (do not need to be sequential)	Loss of all marks for a Unit
Repeated academic misconduct in any units at four or more assessment cycles	Disqualification from qualification
Examples of AI misuse include, but are not limited to, the following: • Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the student's own • Copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content • Using AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the student's own work, analysis, evaluation or calculations • Failing to acknowledge use of AI tools using citations in-text and acknowledgement in the Reference list when they have been used as a source of information • Incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools • Submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies	

- The table above is not an exhaustive list of offences. Where serious Academic Misconduct occurs, NCC Education may escalate to more severe penalties as appropriate.
- Where a candidate is given warning, if the candidate then commits a similar offence at a subsequent assessment cycle then the penalty may be escalated by NCC Education.