



Plagiarism and AI Misuse Policy

April 2025

Family:	Quality
Reviewed and Updated:	August 2024
Issue Date:	April 2025
Next Review Date:	August 2025

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out how The Skills Network:

- Defines plagiarism and unacceptable use of Artificial intelligence (AI) generated work.
- Manage allegations of plagiarism and AI misuse in relation to qualifications delivered.

This policy applies to all learners, staff or other individuals whenever they interact or potentially interact with any of The Skills Network's (TSN's) qualifications.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff at The Skills Network; however particular focus is applied to the below roles and departments:

Directly copying from physical, pictorial or written material without crediting the source

- Assessment and Delivery Staff
- Assessors, Tutors, Trainers, IQAs
 - This includes both employed and freelance individuals.
- Adult Learning
- Skills Bootcamps
- Exams
- Quality

In addition, this policy applies to all learners studying a course delivered via The Skills Network and should be made available to learners.

This policy is applicable across all learning provisions provided by TSN. It is important that staff involved in the management, delivery, operation, or quality assurance of TSN qualifications are aware of the contents of the policy. Staff should make their Learners aware of the contents of this policy. During EQA Activities with Awarding organisations, the Quality Team may need to present relevant policies, procedures, and anecdotal evidence to show that learners and staff are aware of the contents and purpose of this policy.

Please note that within this policy, the term staff will be used to include anyone employed by The Skills Network or anyone working for The Skills Network on a part time, freelance, temporary or consultancy capacity.

This policy will provide:

- A definition of plagiarism
- A definition of AI usage and what is/isn't acceptable use.
- Possible sanctions that may be imposed in cases of plagiarism/unacceptable use of AI on a learner or in cases of non-reporting by staff. Possible sanctions that may be imposed in cases of plagiarism/unacceptable use of AI on a learner or in cases of non-reporting by staff.

Overview:

The Skills Network's policy on plagiarism and the misuse of AI in assessments aligns with the guidance set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) in their "Plagiarism in Assessments – Guidance for Teachers/Assessors" document...

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Plagiarism-in-Assessments.pdf>

...as well as their guidance on "AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications"

https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/AI-Use-in-Assessments_Feb24_v6.pdf

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is using someone else's words, ideas, images, or work without giving them proper credit. This includes copying and pasting from websites, books, or other sources without acknowledging the original author or source. This also includes the use of AI-generated work. AI-generated work is content produced by artificial intelligence or other automated means without substantial input or validation from the learner.

All learners must produce answers to be assessed against learning outcomes and course criteria in their own words, and the result of their own thoughts, ideas and experiences (lived or hypothetical). Where work is not the learners own and external sources or AI has been utilised to form responses and not appropriately referenced then this may be deemed malpractice in the form of plagiarism.

What is AI generated work?

As outlined in the JCQ:

"AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications" https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/AI-Use-in-Assessments_Feb24_v6.pdf,

"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.

AI chatbots are AI tools which generate text in response to user prompts and questions. Users can ask follow-up questions or ask the chatbot to revise the responses already provided. AI chatbots respond to prompts based upon patterns in the data sets (large language model) upon which they have been trained. They generate responses which are statistically likely to be relevant and appropriate. AI chatbots can complete tasks such as the following:

- Answering questions
- Analysing, improving, and summarising text
- Authoring essays, articles, fiction, and non-fiction
- Writing computer code
- Translating text from one language to another
- Generating new ideas, prompts, or suggestions for a given topic or theme
- Generating text with specific attributes, such as tone, sentiment, or formality.

Acceptable use of external sources and AI generated work

Using external sources, learning materials provided and AI generated work can be accepted within an assessment, providing the following conditions are met:

- The use of information, text, data, pictures (list not exhaustive) from third parties, websites, TSN provided learning materials and AI generated content is explicitly acknowledged and appropriately referenced with the author/site/source named appropriate to the level of course or qualification being studied.
- The learner also shows their own knowledge and understanding by providing answers in their own words that is their own genuine effort and thoughts.

Both conditions must be met in order to be deemed sufficiently authentic and acceptable for assessment.

Types of Plagiarism

Plagiarism can take different forms, including:

- Copying and pasting text from a source or website without proper citation - this includes the learning material provided by The Skills Network.
- Paraphrasing someone else's work without acknowledging the source.
- Using images, diagrams, or charts without permission or attribution.
- Submitting someone else's work as your own, whether from a friend or an online source.
- Submitting AI-generated work or any other work that is not their genuine and independent effort, unless explicitly referenced and backed up with examples of your own work, effort, and thoughts.
- Using "re-write" tools available online to amend text copied from other sources or AI-generated.
- Plagiarism also incorporates the direct and unacknowledged translation of foreign language texts into English. <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Plagiarism-in-Assessments.pdf>

What is AI misuse?

All learners must submit work for assessment that is their own. Learner work submitted using AI to develop responses can be accepted for assessment, as long as the work is appropriately referenced and also evidences the learner's own independent work, demonstrating their own knowledge, skills and understanding of the assessment and course they are studying.

The following is taken from the JCQ:

"AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications" https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/AI-Use-in-Assessments_Feb24_v6.pdf

..in relation to definitions of AI Misuse which reflects The Skills Network approach to AI misuse:

Examples of AI misuse include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work submitted for assessment 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 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 Skills Network response to allegations or identification of plagiarism and AI Misuse

All learners are made aware that all work must be submitted in their own words, referencing external sources and AI generated work where appropriate. A declaration is signed by the learner to confirm understanding of this for each assessment submitted. This is also reiterated during interactions with staff.

To reduce the likelihood of plagiarism happening, there is a copy and paste block within the EQUAL platform, which means that learners are unable to copy and paste from external sources directly into their responses. Additional ad-hoc submission checks of learner work are carried out by the Quality Team to further identify potential plagiarism and AI misuse.

To further ensure the originality of our learners' work, we use external plagiarism detection tools. Please be aware that your assessments may be checked by these third-party sites upon submission to identify any instances of plagiarism. If plagiarism is detected, learners will be required to revise and complete their work before it can be submitted for assessment.

All staff involved with the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of qualifications and courses are made aware that plagiarism is not tolerated and to be vigilant for this. Staff are also made aware of what signs may indicate that a submission may be plagiarised including:

- Americanised spelling
- Changes in language used / quality of responses.
- Responses not making sense in relation to the question being asked.
- Differentiation in professional discussion vs written work

The above list is not exhaustive and is intended to be examples only.

It is expected that staff:

- Carry out regular check on learners' submissions during the assessment and IQA process to confirm authenticity.
- Refer work that appears to be plagiarised or where AI has been misused.
- Escalate repeated cases of plagiarism or AI misuse to the Quality Team in line with internal procedures.
- Do not penalise learners where AI/external sources have been used appropriately.
- Maintain a working knowledge of current processes relating to malpractice.

Where tutors, assessors or IQAs have suspicions over the misuse of AI generated work or plagiarism in an assessment they are expected to check the assessment using AI text checkers or plagiarism checkers and make an informed decision regarding the authenticity of the learner's work. The assessor/tutor must refer any questions that are plagiarised to be resubmitted in their own words. If other assessments have been completed and marked the assessor/tutor will need to report this to the Quality Team for sampling.

Where an assessor has referred a learner previously due to AI misuse or plagiarism and the learner submits work that continues to be plagiarised then the assessor must report this to the Quality Team. This is so an independent review of possible sanctions can be undertaken. The Quality team will investigate and advise the assessor appropriately.

If a learner disputes the assessor's claims of AI misuse or plagiarism, then the Appeals Policy can be invoked, and an appeal raised to the Quality Team.

See Appendix 1 for an update regarding the use of Turnitin.

Possible sanctions imposed in cases where plagiarism has been identified

Following an investigation, if a case of plagiarism and/or AI Misuse is evidenced and upheld, The Skills Network may impose sanctions or other penalties on the individual(s) concerned. Where relevant we will report the matter to the awarding bodies who may impose one or more sanctions upon the individual(s) concerned. Any sanctions imposed will reflect the seriousness of the malpractice that has occurred.

Listed below are examples of sanctions that may be applied to a learner who has had a case of plagiarism/AI Misuse upheld against them.

Please note that:

- a) This list is not exhaustive and other sanctions may be applied on a case-by-case basis.
- b) Where the plagiarism/AI misuse affects examination performance, awarding bodies may impose sanctions of their own.
- c) Centre staff relates to all individuals working for The Skills Network in an employed, temporary or freelance capacity, regardless of role.

Possible centre sanctions that may be applied to learners:

- a) Work submitted may be rejected and must be recompleted.
- b) A written warning about future conduct

Turnitin

From April 2025 to further ensure the originality of our learners' work, we may use external plagiarism detection tools that are embedded within the EQUAL platform.

Upon submission of an assessment learners may be asked to consent to the Turnitin plagiarism check. If they agree, a plagiarism check will take place and learners will receive a report of the findings. Once the report has been generated, learners have the option to either submit their assessment for marking, or to review and edit their submission and carry out another check.

- c) A final written warning regarding future assessment conduct with a possibility of removal from the course if conduct continues.
- d) Notification to an employer
- e) Removal from the course
- f) Invalidation of certificate(s).

Where staff fail to identify and/or report a case of suspected plagiarism/AI Misuse to the Quality Team there may be further consequences applied. Depending on the severity of the incident, this may be:

- a) Reminders about the importance of reporting (if identified and work referred without notification)
- b) Requirement to attend a training session on plagiarism.
- c) Requirement to re-assess all work.
- d) Performance Improvement Plans / Disciplinary proceedings
- e) Restriction of duties
- f) Report of maladministration/malpractice to Awarding Organisation

The above policy is to be used in conjunction with other policies of The Skills Network and relevant Awarding Organisations.

Process:

1. Assessor or Tutor or IQA identifies plagiarism or misuse of AI within learner submission – referred at assessment level.
2. Learner resubmits or submits further assessments, further evidence of plagiarism or misuse of AI identified. Referred at assessment level and Quality Team notified.
3. Quality team review and follow up with learner via email communication to advise of written warning including potential next steps and sanctions that may be applied.
4. Further instance of plagiarism or misuse of AI identified may result in withdrawal from programme by Quality Team.

Appendix 1

At this stage, due to an ongoing development at Turnitin, only plagiarism similarity scores are available for learners to view. AI Misuse score visibility for learners is being developed by Turnitin.

Once submitted, Assessors/Tutors/IQAs will have access to the similarity report to taken into consideration when assessing a learner's submission. They will have access to the AI misuse score. It is important to note that staff should not use the outcome of the Turnitin report as the only evidence base for learner authenticity.

If learners do not consent to the automated check using Turnitin, then other checks may be carried out by assessors/tutors/IQAs to determine the authenticity of an assessment, as detailed above. The requirement for consent only applies to the use of Turnitin due to data protection and not for other plagiarism or AI misuse checks that may be undertaken manually by staff, as there is no data stored by a third party. If a learner does not consent to a Turnitin check, this cannot be overridden by staff. Where staff are submitting an assessment on behalf of a learner, no Turnitin check will be carried out.

If a learner disagrees with an assessment outcome where a Turnitin score has been used to support the assessment decisions, then the usual Appeals Process applies. Learners are encouraged to discuss their assessment outcome in the first instance with their assessor, before invoking the formal Appeals procedure if an agreement cannot be sought.

