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QA Apprenticeships: Cheating & Plagiarism Process

2026

Version Control

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Document Approval		
Name	Position	Viewed / Comments
David Hannah	Head of Delivery	First release

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Statement of Endorsement

The following document has been created by David Hannah (Senior Delivery Manager Apprenticeships), and endorsed by Louise Clark (VP Apprenticeships)

QA Ltd cheating & Plagiarism Process

QA is committed to encouraging academic excellence and integrity from learners and confidence among all who deal with QA, including parents, employers, and awarding bodies. To achieve this QA will not tolerate plagiarism.

For QA Scotland this document is related to Qualifications Scotland's guidance on plagiarism which can be found at the following link –

[malpractice-information-centres.pdf](#)

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define areas of academic misconduct to establish the procedures to be followed in suspected cases, plus ensuring adherence to all the requirements of affiliated examination bodies. The document will also identify a potential conflict of interest and explain when a QA employee, such as a DLC, should not be involved in the assessment process for a particular learner.

Plagiarism is a learner using another person's work or idea and presenting it as if it was his or her own. The source of that work may be:

Published work e.g., a book, magazine, or photograph.

Unpublished work e.g., tutor's notes, class handouts, another learner's work (used with or without permission) and material from the Internet.

Using any work produced by someone else in any of these ways without giving them credit is plagiarism and is academic misconduct. Sometimes this plagiarism is done unintentionally due to poor research skills and a lack of understanding of referencing conventions. Sometimes it is done deliberately. In either case plagiarism is not acceptable and should be addressed.

This process refers to the statutory responsibility of QA to meet the requirements of external awarding and examining bodies regarding the behaviour of learners undertaking examinations and summative assessments.

Scope

The Cheating & Plagiarism document works within the framework of One QA and applies to all staff and learners. This document will be applied to all examinations, coursework and any other work produced by the learner.

All learners have the responsibility to establish, maintain and develop the academic standards and values necessary for study. Learners maintain academic integrity by doing their own work and by refusing to assist others in deception. Academic misconduct covers cheating, attempts to cheat, plagiarism, collusion, and any other attempts to gain an unfair advantage in assessment.

Overall strategic responsibility for this procedure lies with the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships. Operational responsibility lies with Senior Tutors and teaching staff for providing clear guidance to learners to ensure compliance with the procedure.

For the purposes of this document on cheating, plagiarism and collusion are defined as follows:

Cheating is any situation where a learner attempts to obtain an unfair advantage when submitting or presenting assessed work or inappropriate conduct during an examination. This also applies to the theft of another learner's work for submission. Plagiarism is any

situation where a learner incorporates un-cited published material, or material produced by another learner into his/ her submitted work, without proper referring therefore implying that it is their own original work. This also applies to the theft of another learner's work for submission.

Collusion is the knowing collaboration without official approval between two or more learners in the preparation and production of work which is ultimately submitted in an identical or substantially similar form and/ or is represented by each to be the product of his or her individual efforts.

The use of AI under assessment methods and the generation of evidence

The Scottish Awarding Body Qualifications Scotland has provided guidance that makes clear, that the use of GenAI is only acceptable when it does not compromise (or attempt to compromise) the integrity of Qualifications Scotland course assessments or certification. Where a candidate and DLC have discussed how generative AI could be included in their research or evaluations of certain knowledge or performance assessment criteria. This would be deemed acceptable, as long as the candidate is clear and transparent that they're using elements of generative AI to give examples and context, around using it to provide supplementary, supportive, and relevant evidence. As long as it's been used proactively by candidates, and in agreement with DLC.



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Objectives

QA is committed to developing outstanding teaching and learning and providing outstanding customer service to meet the needs of all learners.

QA will ensure:

All suspected cases of internal cheating, collusion and plagiarism are reported to the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships for appropriate action. The Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships will then carry out an initial interview with the learner. If the learner maintains that he/she has not engaged in an act of plagiarism, then in conjunction with his/her tutor, the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships may require the learner to participate in:

Oral questioning on the work where plagiarism is suspected. Other procedures as deemed necessary by the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships. If as a result of investigation, the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships is satisfied that on the balance of probabilities the learner has committed an act of plagiarism then the Head of Quality will consider whether the plagiarism constitutes a minor, intermediate or major act of plagiarism and apply an appropriate sanction.

QA will conduct a fair and objective investigation into the complaint and will ensure that the learner has the right to fully participate in any investigations. QA will ensure that the learner has a right of appeal to QA and/or awarding body. If there is a conflict of interest identified with the allocated DLC or internal verifier, then the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships will investigate per the appeals procedure. If there is a conflict of interest related to collusion, bribery, or preferential treatment by a DLC, this will be prohibited per the QA Anti Bribery process.

Minor acts of plagiarism can be dealt with by the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships and are:

- Inaccurate referencing.
- Changing a few words from a copied passage of work and passing it off as original work.

Although these offences may be described as minor, if an assignment has a significant percentage of this type of plagiarism, then the sanction given to the learner should reflect this.

Sanctions for Minor Acts of Plagiarism (see sanction list below)

If:

Sanction 1 - The amount of plagiarism does not exceed 10% of the total assignment.
Sanction 2, 3 or 4 - The learner has committed a previous act(s) of plagiarism, or the plagiarism exceeds 10% of the total assignment.

Sanction 5, 6 or 7 - The learner has committed numerous previous plagiarism offences over the period of their course of study:

Intermediate acts of plagiarism must be referred to the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships and are:

- Two learners on the same course copying from each other.
- A learner copying from a past learner on the same course.
- Verbatim copying from a source(s) without acknowledgement i.e., cutting and pasting from the Internet.

As with minor acts of plagiarism, the sanction given to the learner within this category may vary considering the percentage of copying involved. A learner who has copied a paragraph or two should not receive the same sanction as a learner who has copied the whole or a significant amount of work from another learner or from the Internet.

Sanctions for Intermediate Acts of Plagiarism (see sanction list below)

If:

Sanction 2, 3 or 4 - The total amount of plagiarism does not exceed 10% of the total assignment, or the plagiarism advisor accepts that there are mitigating circumstances in relation to a particular learner.

Sanction 5, 6 or 7 - The learner has committed a previous act(s) of plagiarism, or the plagiarism exceeds 10% of the total assignment.

Sanction 8 or 9 - The learner has been found guilty of numerous previous plagiarism offences over the period of their course of study.

Major Acts of plagiarism must be referred to the Head of Quality and are:

- Purchasing 'custom-made assignments from an Internet site or getting others (including parents) to write the assignment.
- 'Stealing' an assignment from another learner without permission.
- Influencing, colluding with, or attempting to blackmail a member of QA staff to result in a positive assessment decision.

Sanctions for Major Acts of Plagiarism (see sanction list below)

If:

Sanction 5, 6 or 7 - The Head of Quality is satisfied that the learner has established mitigating circumstances in relation to this plagiarism. Sanction 8, 9 or 10 - There are no mitigating circumstances.

Disciplinary Sanctions for Plagiarised Work

The following sanctions are prescribed to punish plagiarism, subject to the type of plagiarism, the severity of the plagiarism and the consideration of any mitigating circumstances. They are instigated after full consultation with the tutor, Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships, Head of Learner Services Apprenticeships and Head of Quality Apprenticeships.

- Discussion with the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships, course tutor and learner.
- Learner resubmits plagiarised work for full marks and no formal record is kept.
- Discussion with the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships, course tutor and learner. Learner resubmits plagiarised work for full marks with a record being kept.

- Resubmission of work for full marks using either a different task or new work.
- Remarking of the original plagiarised work with the plagiarised section removed and the marks reflecting the remaining work.
- Resubmission of new work for a reduced mark.
- Resubmission of new work for a pass grade only.
- Zero marks/fail grade for the piece of work with no resubmission.
- Failure of the whole unit (where applicable).
- Failure of the whole programme.
- Permanent removal from the programme.

Note: With sanctions 1 and 2 the learner will be required to undertake verbal questioning if the plagiarised section includes a key part of an assessment criteria, to ensure that they have a full understanding.

QA Disciplinary Procedure

After a sanction is applied for plagiarism, it is at the discretion of the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships whether the learner should receive a further sanction in the form of a formal verbal or written warning in accordance with the QA Discipline procedure.

Appeals

Appeals against the decision will be subject to the normal QA appeals process in relation to learner discipline.

Mitigation

Mitigating circumstances are circumstances presented by the learner which may have contributed in some way to the learner's behavior. These circumstances do not acquit the learner but allow the reduction of the disciplinary sanction applied. Mitigating circumstances may include things such as ill health, family problems, work problems etc. The list is not exhaustive, and the investigating manager may consider any factors he/she considers pertinent in relation to a particular case.

Monitoring and Reviewing

The document and associated procedures will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Senior Delivery Manager of Apprenticeships, Head of Quality Apprenticeships and Head of Learner Services Apprenticeships.

The effectiveness of the Cheating and Plagiarism document will be measured through:

- The audit of assessment (Internal and External)
- Internal verification reports
- External verification reports
- Analysis of learner feedback
- Course evaluations/reviews



- Analysis of complaints and disciplinary trends

