Academic Malpractice Policy

STEP
ADVISING FAMILIES ACROSS GENERATIONS

Our education partner
CLTI

In association with
MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester
Alliance Manchester Business School

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1. Introduction

The rules of discipline contained herein apply to all registered CLTI learners irrespective of their mode, level or place of study. Learners, as members of STEP, are expected to abide by the STEP code of professional conduct which highlights the principal professional standards that a STEP member is expected to uphold. STEP considers academic malpractice a serious breach of the code and reserves the right to investigate any breach of the code under section 3, integrity. Any breach of the code may lead to disciplinary action.

Academic malpractice is any activity, intentional or otherwise, that is likely to undermine the integrity essential to the qualifications offered by STEP. It includes plagiarism, collusion, fabrication or falsification of results, and anything else that could result in unearned or undeserved credit or an advantage over other learners.

Academic malpractice can result from a deliberate act of cheating but may be committed unintentionally through failure to cite sources of information adequately. Whether intended or not, all incidents of academic malpractice will be treated seriously by CLTI.

Evidence of mitigating circumstances will always be assessed, but it is for CLTI to decide whether it may be taken into account when determining the penalty to be applied. This will enable CLTI to consider offering appropriate help, in accordance with the CLTI mitigating circumstances policy.

CLTI is obliged, when determining a penalty to be imposed as a consequence of academic malpractice, to take into account the consequences that the penalty will have for the academic progression of the learner concerned.

CLTI regards any form of academic malpractice as a serious matter. Where there is clear evidence of academic malpractice penalties will be imposed which, may include failure of qualifications in serious cases.

2. Responsibilities of CLTI

It is the responsibility of CLTI to ensure that all learners, irrespective of the level of programme or model of learning (face-face or distance/ online) or place of learning (UK or international), are given ample opportunity to understand fully the academic standards and requirements that they must satisfy.

It must be clearly understood that:

- acts of academic malpractice are not acceptable in any circumstances;
- where such acts are shown to have occurred, an appropriate penalty will always be enforced.

No circumstances justify academic malpractice, and a penalty must always be applied. Although learners may present evidence of mitigating circumstances (which may be taken into account when determining the penalty to be applied), it must always be borne in mind that learners are encouraged to bring such circumstances to the attention of CLTI at the earliest possible opportunity so that CLTI can consider offering appropriate help; this is in accordance with the policy and procedures on mitigating circumstances. Lack of time, or too much work, do not constitute mitigating circumstances.

Factors that CLTI will take into account when determining the penalty and its proportionality include the following.

The proportion of the whole course represented by the piece of work that was subject to malpractice: the higher the proportion, the more serious the offence.

a. The learner's previous history: a subsequent offence, occurring after a learner has already received a warning or a penalty for academic malpractice, is more serious than a first offence.

b. The degree of intention to deceive in the piece of work in question (which might be assessed by, for example, efforts to change wording, poor referencing or lack of referencing of plagiarised material, evidence from earlier drafts) and also in the hearing itself by failure to tell the truth.

3. Responsibilities of CLTI learners

All learners are responsible for making themselves aware of the policy and procedures contained herein, for understanding the seriousness of academic malpractice and for taking every reasonable step to ensure that academic malpractice does not occur.

4. Principles governing the submission of work

The assessment of learners is based on the principle that, unless clearly stated in the assessment criteria, the work submitted by a registered learner for assessment has been carried out by that learner and is their own work.

Where group work is an approved part of the assessment process, the assessment instructions will make clear the nature and content of, and assessment criteria for, such group-based activity.

All elements of assessment must be the learner's own work and any passages quoted or paraphrased, or opinions relied upon, must be properly attributed and cited using the correct method. Quotation marks must always be used for direct quotations.

Learners must complete the AI use declaration at submission required by the CLTI AI Policy. This declaration forms part of the formal assessment record.

CLTI accepts that a learner's writing can be influenced by the work of others, but such work must not be copied or paraphrased in whole sentences or paragraphs without appropriate acknowledgement.

By submitting work for assessment, learners are declaring that the submitted work is their own, and that it has not been submitted in a similar or identical form towards any other assessment or qualification by the learner or any other person.

Submission is undertaken by uploading the work online through a learner account. If this procedure has not been followed, CLTI has the right to refuse to mark the piece until the learner has complied.

5. Definitions of academic malpractice

5.1 Malpractice

Malpractice includes plagiarism, collusion, impersonation, cheating, falsification, and inappropriate conduct.

5.2 Cheating in examinations

Cheating in examinations consists of any of the following activities.

- Communicating with or copying from any other learner during an examination, except in so far as the rubric may specifically permit.
- Other than where the assessment rules specifically permits, communicating during an examination with any person other than a properly authorised invigilator.
- Introducing any written, printed or electronically stored information into an examination room, unless expressly permitted by the assessment rules for the examination.
- Gaining access to any unauthorised material relating to an examination during or before the specified time.
- Making use of electronic calculators and other portable electronic devices except as permitted under the assessment rules of the examination, and in the provision for candidates with additional assessment requirements.

- Using artificial intelligence tools to generate, modify, or assist with assessment responses unless explicitly permitted by the assessment rules. This includes submitting AI-generated content as original work, or using AI to fabricate, alter, or enhance answers during or in preparation for an assessment.
- Fabricating information in an examination, e.g. use of artificial citations.
- Impersonating another learner or procuring an impersonator.
- Taking photos of online questions and sharing.
- Discussing after the exam/assessment any content of the assessment with other students.

5.3 Plagiarism

Learner plagiarism is a form of academic malpractice, and is defined as presenting the ideas, work or words of other people without proper, clear and unambiguous acknowledgement.

This includes:

- Self-plagiarism, which occurs when a learner submits work that they have previously presented for assessment, either in whole or in part, without appropriate citation. Although the work is the learner's own, reusing it without disclosure undermines the integrity of the assessment process, as each submission is expected to represent new, original effort and learning
- Ghostwriting or contract cheating this is where a learner requests another individual or external body to produce material for them with the intention of submitting it as their own. This includes:
    - Downloading or purchasing essays from the internet
    - Using artificial intelligence tools (e.g. large language models or essay generators) to produce full or partial assessment responses. This applies regardless of whether the content is correctly referenced. Simply citing AI tool(s)does not make its use acceptable.

- Any form of outsourced or automated content creation that substitutes for the learner's own intellectual effort, whether or not the source is disclosed.
- Wholesale verbatim copying or insertion of multiple paragraphs of another person's work (published or unpublished and including material freely available in electronic form and including work of another learner) without acknowledgement of sources.
- The close paraphrasing of another person's work by simply changing some of the words or altering the order of presentation, without acknowledgement
- Unacknowledged quotation of phrases from another person's work
- The deliberate and detailed presentation of another person's concept as one's own
- Ghost writing or contract cheating – where a learner requests another learner or external body to write/ produce material for them for purposes of submitting it as their own. This also includes the downloading or purchasing of essays from the Internet
- Using AI tools to paraphrase or rewrite source material, or to produce content later presented as the learner's own original work, without appropriate referencing
- Resubmitting in its entirety (or substantial sections of) one's own work which has previously been submitted for another module or programme.

5.4 Collusion

One of the most blatant examples of plagiarism is copying another learner's work.

It is essential to make clear in your assessments the distinction between your own original contributions and any material derived from other sources, including your own prior work.

Collusion occurs where a learner:

- Knowingly submits as entirely his/her own work, work produced in collaboration with another person without approval of CLTI

- Collaborates with another learner in the production of work that they know is intended to be submitted as that other candidate's own unaided work
- Knowingly permits another learner to copy all or part of their own work and to submit it as that candidate's own unaided work.

5.5 Fabrication and falsification

- Fabrication of results occurs when a learner falsely claims, for example, to have carried out tests, research or observations as part of their assessed work, or presents fabricated results arising from the same with the object of gaining an advantage.
- Fabrication may also include, for example, reporting/presentation of artificial references or other source material purporting to demonstrate a depth of reading/ knowledge beyond that undertaken, or to deflect the reader from plagiarised material, e.g. embellishment of the bibliography.
- Falsification also includes making false statements or falsifying evidence in support of applications, for example for mitigating circumstances or academic appeals. Where evidence is related to disability and reasonable adjustments, CLTI reserves the right to seek a second opinion and/or further information if there is a substantial concern about the level, or standard, of evidence.

5.6 Impersonation

Impersonation is the act of one individual assuming the identity of another with the intent to deceive within the assessment process. This constitutes a serious form of malpractice. It includes, but is not limited to, situations where CLTI cannot verify the identity of the learner or apprentice during an assessment.

For example, during remote invigilation, turning off your camera or otherwise obstructing identity verification may be treated as impersonation. CLTI requires clear and continuous visual confirmation of the learner throughout the assessment to ensure integrity and authenticity.

5.7 Producing inappropriate or offensive material that includes, but not limited to:

- obscenities, offensive comments
- racist remarks, lewd comments and drawings
- material that may cause offence to CLTI markers or CLTI members of staff.

5.8 Use of AI

CLTI recognises that AI tools, including large language models (LLMs), are widely available and may support learning in general. However, learners must not use AI tools to generate, draft, or assist with the writing of assessment responses, in whole or in part.

AI-generated content is not acceptable for submission as assessed work, whether verbatim, edited, or paraphrased, and referencing or citing the AI tool does not remove this restriction. Learners are required to demonstrate their own understanding, analysis, and original work, which AI-assisted drafting cannot satisfy regardless of how it is acknowledged.

Use of any AI tool during a STEP examination or other invigilated or time-constrained assessment is not permitted unless expressly stated on the assessment paper.

Learners should also be aware that AI tools can produce inaccurate, biased, or unreliable output, and should not rely on them when preparing for assessment.

For the full position on acceptable and unacceptable use of AI tools, see CLTI's AI Policy.

6. Procedures for dealing with academic malpractice

All assessment items submitted (assignments and examinations) will be subject to scrutiny for malpractice until the point at which marks are confirmed by the CLTI assessment board.

Where malpractice has been suspected at a late stage in the assessment process and has not been resolved at the time of the assessment board meeting, the board will not consider the learner marks until the investigation has been conducted and the matter resolved.

7. Matters of academic maladminstration

Matters of academic maladministration that shall be noted at the assessment board and reported to the learner include the following.

7.1 A lack of proper referencing

a. Assessments that do not comply with the requirements to properly reference material that is not the learner's own original work may result in a deduction in the mark or the award of a mark of zero.

b. The nature of the penalty applied will be a matter of professional academic judgement by the academic regulation and standards team.

7.2 Late submissions assignments

Penalties will be applied to those learners who submit their assignment after the due date as follows:

Unexcused late submission of assessed work will be penalised to prevent students from benefiting from an unfair advantage.

Penalties for any assignment submitted after the designated deadline are as follows:

	Penalty to be applied (marks deducted)
Answer submitted up to 5 days after the submission deadline	5% deduction
Answer submitted up to 6 - 10 days after the submission deadline	Additional 2% deduction **per day**
Answer submitted more than 10 days after the submission deadline	Not accepted

7.3 Late submissions exam paper submissions

Penalties will be applied to those learners who submit their exam paper after the due date and time as follows:

Unexcused late submission of assessed work will be penalised to prevent students from benefiting from an unfair advantage.

Penalties for any exam paper submitted after the designated deadline are as follows:

	Penalty to be applied (marks deducted)
Answer submitted up to 30 minutes after the answer submission deadline	10% deduction
Answer submitted between 31-60 minutes after the answer submission deadline	15% deduction
Answer submitted more than 60 minutes after the answer submission deadline	Not accepted

Late submissions for assignments given an extension date will not be permitted.

We strongly recommend that you do not leave it too close to the answer submission deadline to submit your answer. You should allow time to resolve any unexpected problems. If technical problems prevent you from successfully submitting your work online, you must contact CLTI prior to the submission deadline via our live chat or phone. Penalties cannot be removed because the network was busy around the time of the submission deadline.

7.4 Exceeding word count for assignments penalties will be applied for excessive word count as follows:

	Penalty to be applied (deduction)
1 - 50% over the specified word limit	10% deduction
More than 50% over the specified word limit	The work will be given a zero mark

CLTI retain the right to refer any cases listed above to an academic malpractice committee where there are concerns that it is part of a wider or repeated similar behaviour.

8. Reporting concerns about suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments

Sometimes, an individual or member of the public has reason to believe that malpractice has occurred or will occur in an examination or assessment. Concerns should be reported to CLTI vis our contact us page on our website. Members of staff who wish to report suspected malpractice relating to where they work are protected under the UK Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA). Members of the public are not protected by PIDA, but CLTI will make every effort to protect their identity if that is what they wish, unless legally obliged to release it.

CLTI takes all reports of malpractice seriously, but in order to investigate concerns effectively we will require information of a reasonably detailed standard. We will accept anonymous reports, although knowing how the information has been obtained and the reporting party's relationship with the learner may add credibility.

Anyone wishing to report suspected malpractice to CLTI should include as much of the following information as possible/is relevant:

- the qualifications and subjects involved
- the learner involved
- the regulations breached/specific nature of suspected malpractice
- when and where the suspected malpractice occurred
- how the issue became apparent.

Documentary evidence can be particularly useful and should be provided where it is available. Reports of suspected malpractice should be sent via our contact us page on our website. Anonymous reports are accepted but may limit investigation. CLTI will protect identities unless legally required to disclose.

9. Suspected malpractice in examinations

A learner suspected of cheating will be allowed to complete their examinations in the normal way and the normal assessment procedures will be initiated.

When cheating is suspected, the Academic Director will be informed immediately by the invigilator(s) or other members of staff involved, who will provide a full report in writing.

10.Suspected malpractice in assignments

If academic malpractice is suspected in an assignment, written portfolio or similar piece of work, the work should continue to be marked or assessed to gather evidence of the extent of the alleged malpractice, and the matter should be reported to the Academic Director, and the result withheld pending an investigation.

The assessment coordinators should submit a brief report, identifying the possible malpractice to CLTI, who will undertake the investigation.

11.Appeals

Appeals must be based on procedural errors, bias, or new evidence. Please see our appeals policy for detail available on our website.

12.Malpractice investigations

Appeals that are considered by CLTI to raise serious or complex matters that require further investigation and enquiry will be referred to the academic director. The learner will be given ten working days' notice of the date and time of the malpractice investigation meeting and will be invited to attend the meeting to present their case. This meeting will be held virtually.

Together with notice of the meeting the learner shall be sent information specifying:

- the nature, date and time of the suspected malpractice, including a copy of the evidence
- that they may call up to three persons to support their case, but that they must inform the academic director prior to the hearing of the names of those persons and their relationship to the candidate
- that they may be accompanied by a supporting person

- the procedures to be followed if the candidate wishes to appeal against any decision arising from the malpractice investigation meeting

The designated supporting person must be eligible to provide support to the learner at the time of the meeting. This would normally involve their being in attendance, they will however not include helping the learner with their responses.

It is not normal for the supporting person to speak throughout on the learners' behalf, owing to the purpose of the inquiry. They may however, assist with articulation of responses and, where appropriate, issues of recall.

The learner will be sent copies of all documents to be made available to the malpractice investigation meeting. Where AI use is relevant to the case, this may include AI prompts and outputs the learner is required to retain under the CLTI AI Policy. The academic director is empowered to call members of staff with knowledge of the case to attend the meeting to give evidence and to correspond with external examiners or others as appropriate. The learner and the accompanying person will be permitted to speak and to question any persons giving oral evidence to the malpractice investigation meeting.

13. Assessing the severity of academic malpractice

Each case is different, and the malpractice investigation meeting will be expected to use their judgement in deciding the seriousness of an offence and deciding whether there are circumstances that might affect the severity of the penalty.

There must be an attempt to ensure consistency of treatment between cases, making and recording a judgement about what is a proportionate penalty.

The penalty chosen will not have consequences for academic progression owing to any disproportionate impact.

Factors to take into account when determining the penalty and its proportionality include:

- the learner's level of study: the more advanced and experienced the learner(the more serious the offence)
- the proportion of the whole course represented by the piece of work that was subject to malpractice (the higher the proportion, the more serious the offence)
- the learner's previous history (a subsequent offence, occurring after a learner has already received a warning or a penalty for academic malpractice, is more serious than a first offence)
- the degree of intention to deceive in the piece of work in question (which might be assessed not only by, for example, efforts to change wording, poor referencing or lack of referencing of plagiarised material, evidence from earlier drafts, but also in the hearing itself by failure to tell the truth).

The judgement made on any case shall give details of the relevant factors taken into account, stating the degree to which they contributed to the decision and will state the malpractice investigation meeting intentions as regards the impact of the penalty on progression/qualification awarded. It will also refer to any other matters taken into account; for example, any mitigating circumstances, so that precedence and best practice may be established.

The written record will also be important in the event that the learner makes an appeal concerning the disciplinary process/outcome.

14.Outcomes of cases taken to investigation meeting

If the malpractice investigation meeting finds that there is no evidence of malpractice, the assessment should take place as normal.

Where the malpractice investigation meeting decides that there is de facto evidence that malpractice has occurred, one of the following recommended penalties will be applied.

- There are no acceptable excuses for academic malpractice, however, mitigating circumstances will be taken into account, and may lessen a penally, if considered to be directly linked to the incident
- The mark for the specific item is reduced. Where this results in a fail grade, the learner will be subject to normal reassessment (resit) procedures
- The mark for the specific item is reduced. Where this results in a fail grade, the learner will have the right to only one opportunity of reassessment
- The learner is deemed to have failed in the specific element of assessment where the malpractice has occurred. The learner will be subject to normal reassessment (resit) procedures
- The learner is deemed to have failed in the specific element of assessment where the malpractice has occurred. The learner will have no right to reassessment opportunities
- The learner may be expelled from the course without the award for which they registered. In these circumstances STEP will be notified
- The learner is formally reprimanded, zero will be recorded for the performance of the learner in all the written examinations and other assessments they sat in the calendar year the offence occurred, and that the learner not be permitted to retake the assessment in the following 12 months; and

a. That the learner, where eligible, should retake the assessments at the next available opportunity but the mark recorded will be 'capped' at the pass-mark; or

b. That the learner is not to be permitted to re-enter for any assessments before the expiry of a stated period, not exceeding two years and the mark recorded will be 'capped' at the pass-mark; or

c. That the learner is to be permitted to re-enter for those assessments on the next available opportunity but the mark recorded will be 'capped' at the pass-mark, but that no qualification is to be awarded to the learner before the expiry of a stated period, not exceeding two years, following satisfactory completion of the conditions for the award.

The learner is formally reprimanded, that zero is to be recorded for the performance of the learner in all the written examinations and other assessments they sat in the calendar year the offence occurred and they are to excluded from any future assessments administered under CLTI/STEP's jurisdiction.

- The learner may be expelled from the course without the award for which they registered and barred from any future assessment. In these circumstances STEP will be notified.

15.Matters following the investigation meeting

The academic director shall compile a written report and forwarded to the CLTI assessment team and the relevant assessment board(s) as appropriate.

The learner will be informed of the malpractice investigation meeting decision, with reasons, within five working days and will be issued with a completion of procedures letter.

Where the malpractice investigation meeting is of the opinion that malpractice has occurred, its report will include an assessment of the seriousness of the incident and the outcome recommendation. A statement outlining the findings of the malpractice investigation meeting shall be communicated in writing to the learner as soon as possible after the meeting.

In all cases a record of the proceedings shall be kept, including details of the evidence presented by both sides and the decision of the meeting . Records will be retained as detailed in our privacy policy.

16.CLTI use of plagiarism detection software

CLTI uses plagiarism detection software to check that learners are working in a fair and academically appropriate manner. CLTI uses text comparison software to detect potential cases of plagiarism in work that is submitted for assessment.

Our plagiarism software carries out the equivalent of an Internet search, looking for matches between the text included in a piece of work submitted by a learner with all forms of information and resources publicly available on the internet.

The primary use of plagiarism detection software is to identify instances of direct copying and/or improper referencing of various source materials. It may also be used to compare each learner's assessments with module content and commonly used or provided references. Additionally, the software will check for indicators of AI-generated content and flag these where appropriate.

For each assessment submitted to our plagiarism software, an 'originality' report is produced showing the percentage of text that matches other sources. These reports will be made available to the academic regulation and standards team and in some cases, they may decide to take the matter further. This may result in some further guidance about academic conduct and support to avoid any further incidents or, if more serious, may result in further action being taken.

Depending on the questions being asked and the format of the submitted answer, some level of matching between scripts and with other sources is expected. The academic regulation and standards team will take all such matters into account when reviewing each of the reports and deciding whether a learner has plagiarised.

The CLTI designated officer will assess whether or not the evidence suggests that academic malpractice may have been committed.

If the CLTI designated officer judges that the case does not constitute academic malpractice but rather poor academic practice, the matter will be noted to the learner, with appropriate advice as to how to proceed.

In determining whether an instance constitutes a repeat (subsequent) offence, penalties applied in a previous programme of study/award shall not be included. Repeat offences are those that take place in work contributing to a single award.

After a penalty is applied to an assessment within a programme, any further infringement within that programme will be considered a repeat offence.

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