



# Academic Integrity Policy

V5 November 2024

Approved

## Academic Integrity Policy

### Purpose of the Policy

NESCOT takes all incidents of academic misconduct very seriously and is committed to ensuring that students understand the seriousness of academic dishonesty. This includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, collusion, malpractice and the use of AI-generated content.

We will take appropriate action against any instances of misconduct. This policy outlines the procedures for handling suspected cases of academic dishonesty or malpractice.

### Aims

- To identify and minimise the risk of malpractice
- To respond to any incident of alleged malpractice promptly and objectively
- To standardise and record any investigation of malpractice to ensure openness and fairness
- To protect the integrity of NESCOT and all the qualifications we deliver.
- To comply with the external regulations of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and awarding bodies.

To do this, NESCOT will:

- Foster a culture in which all learners and staff feel able to report any concerns of wrongdoing by anyone
- Seek to prevent malpractice by using the induction period and the learner handbook to inform learners of the centre's policy on malpractice and the sanctions for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice
- Show learners the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources
- Require learners to declare that their work is their own
- Ask learners to provide evidence that they have interpreted and synthesised appropriate information and acknowledged any sources used
- Provide learners of the centre's AI Guidelines on MyNescot student page and AI position statement under Appendix 2 .
- Require learners to acknowledge the use of artificial intelligence (AI) sources where they can be used and provide copies of any interactions with AI tools made in the production of their work.

NESCOT condemns all forms of academic malpractice and misconduct, including fabrication, collusion, and the use of AI-generated content. Misconduct may include, but is not limited to:

- False declaration of authenticity in relation to the submission of work
- Plagiarism of any nature, including the use of generative AI
- Submitting previously assessed work for the same or a different course
- Submitting work written or modified by another person
- Submitting another student's work, regardless of prior submission
- Including offensive or obscene material in assessments
- Altering or falsifying results or data

- Using an essay mill or contracting third parties to complete assignments for a fee
- Failing to properly reference or acknowledge sources, which may include:
  - Close paraphrasing without source acknowledgment
  - Direct quoting without using quotation marks
  - Presenting substantial extracts without proper citation or quotation marks
- Obtaining unauthorised access to assessment materials
- Introducing unauthorised material into an assessment conducted under controlled conditions
- Colluding or attempting to collude on individual assessments
- Disruptive behaviour during exams or controlled assessments
- Deliberate destruction of another's work
- Impersonation during assessments

This list is not exhaustive, and other forms of misconduct may also be considered under this policy. Please also see Appendix 1 and 2.

### **Procedure**

The following two-stage procedure will be applied in all cases of suspected academic dishonesty.

#### **Stage 1: Informal Stage**

The purpose of this stage is to determine whether there is sufficient evidence of plagiarism or misconduct to warrant a formal inquiry.

If a student is suspected of academic dishonesty, the tutor should request a colleague to either double mark or review the work in question. The tutor must then assess whether the student has committed academic dishonesty or simply failed to understand the concepts of plagiarism or malpractice. If the tutor is uncertain about the nature of the offense, they should consult the Head of Department and/or the Head of Quality.

If there is sufficient evidence of plagiarism or malpractice, Stage 2 of the procedure must be initiated within 10 working days of completing Stage 1 and the learner should be notified of this by the Head of Department.

**Guidance:** For Level 2 or newly enrolled Level 3 students, instances of plagiarism may be dealt with as part of their learning process, and tutors may address them through feedback and correction. However, Level 3 students nearing the end of their studies should not make such errors, and tutors are expected to apply this stage more strictly. Level 4 and higher, as well as HE students, should always submit work with correct referencing. In cases involving higher education students, staff should refer to the HE Academic Misconduct Policy for further guidance on managing these instances.

If plagiarism is deemed unintentional or naive, the student should correct and resubmit the work according to any resubmission guidelines set by the awarding body or higher education institution.

## **Stage 2: Formal enquiry**

In cases of suspected academic dishonesty, a formal enquiry will be conducted by a panel consisting of an independent chair (Head of Quality), Course Leader, Head of Department, and the learner's Tutor. An Administrative Assistant, nominated by the Head of Department, will support the panel by ensuring all parties, including the learner, are notified of the date and time of the hearing and receive all relevant written materials at least five working days in advance.

The Tutor who suspects the academic dishonesty will present their case to the panel, typically in person. The learner will have the opportunity to present their own case and may be accompanied by another NESCOL learner, parent, or carer. However, only the student may address the panel directly. If the student has a disclosed support need, they may also bring a representative from the support department.

Both the Tutor and the learner will remain present throughout the hearing, and the learner will be given a final opportunity to respond. After hearing both parties, the panel will deliberate privately and reach a reasoned judgment, which will be recorded in formal minutes and submitted as a recommendation to the appropriate awarding organisation in accordance with the awarding organisation guidelines on malpractice.

The panel's decision will be communicated to the learner in writing within five working days of the hearing. Any appeal against the decision will follow NESCOL's standard procedures for academic appeals.

### ***Where a case of academic dishonesty has been established***

The panel has discretion to determine the nature of the offence and impose appropriate penalties. These may include the failure of part or all of the assessment(s), failure of the unit/module, or exclusion from the course. The panel will also decide if the learner should be permitted reassessment. If academic dishonesty is discovered after an award has been confirmed, the award may be reconsidered.

All confirmed cases of academic dishonesty and the actions taken will be reported to the relevant awarding organisation or examination body.

This document is available in alternative formats such as larger print. Please contact Student Services if you require this type of assistance.

## **Appendix 1:**

The following are examples of malpractice by learners; this list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by Nescot at its discretion.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work, words, images, ideas, opinions or discoveries, whether published or unpublished, as one's own. This includes using the artwork, images or computer-generated work of others without properly acknowledging the source, with or without their permission.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- Directly copying from written physical, pictorial or computer-generated (inc. AI) material without crediting the source.
- Paraphrasing someone else's work without crediting the source.
- Copying class notes and handouts provided by teaching, learning and assessment employees.
- Re-submission of work previously submitted for another assignment.
- See also the 'Collusion' section.

### **Misconduct in examinations/ assessments**

- Impersonating a learner in an examination.
- Disruptive behaviour in the examination room or during an assessment session.
- Any form of communication with another learner during an examination/ assessment (written, verbal, gestures, expressions, pointing etc.).
- Copying from another learner's work.
- Introducing unauthorised materials into the examination room (regardless of the learner's intent or whether the learner uses them during the examination).
- The unauthorised use of a memory stick or similar device where a learner uses a word processor to complete an examination.
- Obtaining access to confidential examination material before the official examination/ assessment date.
- Failing to abide by instructions given by an invigilator, assessor or the awarding body in relation to examination or assessment rules and regulations.
- Failing to abide by the conditions of supervision designed to maintain the security of the examinations or assessments.
- Exchanging, receiving, discussing or passing on the confidential content of examinations e.g. on internet forums, social media, text or in person, even if the candidate was not the person who originally obtained the information.
- The inclusion of inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in scripts, controlled assessment, non-examination assessment, coursework or portfolios.
- The deliberate destruction of another candidate's work or assessment records.
- Bribery
- The unauthorised possession and/or use of smart phones, smart watches and other electronic communication devices in an examination.

## Collusion

Where learners are required to work with others on an assessment, this will be clearly stated in the assessment guidelines and constitutes approved collaboration. Unless otherwise stated, work is to be undertaken by one individual and collaboration is not permitted. A learner who works with others to produce work that is then submitted as their own unaided work may be found to have colluded.

Examples of collusion include:

- Working with one or more people to produce a piece of work and submitting it individually as one's own.
- Getting someone else to produce part or all of the work submitted as one's own.
- Copying the work of another learner, with or without their permission.
- Allowing another learner to copy one's own work.

## Fabrication, falsification or misrepresentation

The presentation of fabricated data, results, references, evidence or other material or the misrepresentation of the same.

For example:

- Claiming to have carried out experiments, interviews, observations or other forms of research which a learner did not complete.
- Falsely claiming to have obtained results or other evidence.
- The falsification of references, including the invention of references and/or false claims.
- The falsification of any information with a view to gaining an unfair advantage.

## **Appendix 2:**

### **AI Position Statement**

#### **Background**

The rapid development of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) since November 2022, with tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot and many more, has transformed how we interact with technology. As this field continues to evolve swiftly, it is crucial for NESCOL to adopt a forward-thinking approach that ensures both staff and students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to engage with this technology in a safe and responsible manner.

Generative AI offers a unique opportunity to enrich the learning experience of our students by promoting higher-order critical thinking and creativity. As AI continues to shape the future workplace, proficiency in using these tools will become a key skill. Therefore, it is essential that our students not only gain competence in using Generative AI but also understand how to harness its potential effectively.

As with any emerging technology, it is important that both staff and students are made fully aware of the advantages and disadvantages of Generative AI. They must also consider the broad ethical implications associated with its use. Predictions about the impact of AI on the job market are continuously evolving, and as educators, we must adapt our curriculum to embed skills that will help our learners succeed in this changing landscape. These skills include critical and creative thinking, self-regulation, social and emotional intelligence (empathy, responsibility, collaboration), and practical skills related to emerging technologies.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

While Generative AI provides fast and often helpful responses, it can also offer inaccurate, biased, or incomplete information. Over-reliance on these tools may hinder the development of critical thinking skills, which are vital for informed decision-making and effective learning. It is also important to note that AI tools should not replace human authorship in the creation of original work. Using AI to gain an unfair advantage may breach academic integrity standards.

#### **Generative AI in Teaching and Learning**

Staff should be mindful of both the strengths and limitations of Generative AI tools. These tools can produce content that is poorly reasoned, outdated, factually incorrect, or biased. To promote responsible use, NESCOL has developed AI Guidelines and training resources through CPD to guide both staff and students on the appropriate and ethical utilisation of Generative AI. These resources align with NESCOL's digital competency framework, ensuring a consistent approach across the institution.

Fostering AI literacy is vital to help staff and students fully understand the benefits and risks of using AI tools within an educational context.

#### **Generative AI in Assessment**

While NESCOL recognises the potential benefits of Generative AI for learning, students are not permitted to submit work for summative assessment that has been fully generated by AI. Submitting AI-generated work as one's own will be regarded as a violation of academic integrity since it is not created by the student and the Academic Integrity Policy will be applied in all cases of suspected academic dishonesty.

If a tutor permits the use of Generative AI, students must:

- Clearly acknowledge the use of AI, including the extent of its use and how it contributed to their work.
- Properly cite and reference any AI-generated content that has not been altered, using the appropriate referencing style. This may include citing sources such as "artificial intelligence" or "non-recoverable sources."

NESCOT has implemented AI Guidelines which staff and students should refer to.

### **Generative AI and NESCOT’s Learning Philosophy**

At NESCOT, our learner-centric philosophy encourages students to take ownership of their learning journey. Integrating Generative AI into our educational practices can further personalise the learning experience, enabling students to explore content in a way that aligns with their individual learning styles and interests.

However, while AI can assist with data processing and analysis, it lacks the emotional intelligence and experiential understanding that is inherent to human cognition. AI cannot replicate the complex emotional and cognitive processes that are fundamental to human learning and experience.

Incorporating AI into education can complement, but never replace, the human elements of learning. Our responsibility is to ensure that students and staff develop a balanced approach to using AI, recognising both its capabilities and its limitations.

Version	V5
Policy Originator:	Head of Quality
Equality Impact Assessed:	
Approved by:	CLT
Date Approved:	July 2006
Review Interval:	2 Year
Last Review Date:	Oct 2024
Next Review Date:	Oct 2025
Audience:	Staff and Students
Entered on SP	08/11/24
Entered on website	11/11/24