Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the action of passing off the work/evidence of another learner as a learner's own work/evidence.

Whilst it is common and often necessary for learners to learn from the work of others (eg academic staff, fellow learners and published material), it is equally essential that learners always acknowledge the source of the ideas and information they use in their work that is not their own.

Plagiarism may involve copying from the work of a fellow learner, quoting from learning resources or published text, or downloading material from the internet. In these cases, learners must clearly state their source.

Plagiarism involves not only written work/evidence, but all forms of work/evidence which learners may submit for assessment, including, artefacts, musical compositions, computer data in electronic form.

Open Awards expects all forms of plagiarism to be treated very seriously by staff at its recognised centres, and centres should have in place their own Plagiarism Policy and process for handling suspected cases of plagiarism.

Why does plagiarism happen?

There are a variety of reasons why learners plagiarise, but some typical causes may be:

- learner's lack of awareness of the regulations
- learner's lack of skill in using source material/acknowledging the use the material
- common use of the internet as a source of ideas/information
- pressure on learner to succeed
- learner not allowing sufficient time to produce their work/evidence

Preventing plagiarism

Learners must be made aware of a centre's Plagiarism Policy and Malpractice/Maladministration Policy, and receive information on the commonly used acceptable conventions for correctly acknowledging the source of the ideas and information as part of their course induction.

To reduce the chance for plagiarism, assignments should as far as possible be designed to make 'copying' or using the work of others not helpful/appropriate.

Where tests are used as an assessment method, it is good practice to rotate/randomise the test questions for cohorts, have a bank on tests to draw upon, and to not use the same tests for two consecutive periods.

Centres may consider implementing a declaration that learners sign to confirm that the work/evidence is their own work.

Detecting plagiarism

Centres may consider gaining access to plagiarism detection software which can be used as part of their assignment submission policy or used to regularly run randomised checks on pieces of work to test for possible instances of plagiarism.

Dealing with plagiarism

Stages in the process for investigating plagiarism are:

- Keeping watch – check learner's work for acknowledgement of sources, varying quality of content, the use of a mixture of vocabulary/spellings/punctuation/presentation.

- Confirming – if you suspect an assignment has been plagiarised, you must try to locate the source via the internet and/or plagiarism detection software. It is also helpful to speak with the learner as ask them questions about the assignment, to assess whether the work is that of the learner.

- Reporting – if your suspensions are confirmed the matter should be treated as malpractice and investigated as such.

Handling suspected plagiarism

Centres must investigate the case following the centre's own published malpractice/maladministration policy to establish whether plagiarism has taken place. Where plagiarism is identified, the centre must take appropriate action, investigate, and notify their Open Awards Moderator/External Verifier or Open Awards' Quality Manager (Regulation & Standards).

Where a case of confirmed plagiarism malpractice is identified by, or reported, to an Open Awards Moderator/External Verifier or Open Awards' Quality Manager (Regulation & Standards), Open Awards will implement its published Malpractice/Maladministration Policy. Open Awards may impose a sanction(s) applied to the learner, as necessary if the case is confirmed, in line with its published Sanctions Policy.

Appeals

Open Awards expects that most cases will be resolved internally using the centre's own plagiarism and malpractice/maladministration policy(ies) and procedures, which must be made available to all learners at the start of their course.

However if the matter has still not been resolved, the case may be reported to Open Awards for adjudication.

Please refer to Open Awards Malpractice/Maladministration Policy for further information.

Additional information on Plagiarism and guidance for Teachers/Tutors/Assessors can be found on the Joint Council for Qualifications website (www.jcq.org.uk)

Other useful websites are:

http://virtualsalt.com/antiplag.htm
http://www.plagiarism.org
http://www.turnitin.com