



Plagiarism Policy

Last reviewed- 20/4/2023

Next review- 1/4/2024

Reviewed by - Jan Kelly

Approved by - Trustees

Introduction

As an organisation that carries out assessment, *Step into Learning* has an obligation to assessment bodies, its learners, employers and society in general to ensure that the qualifications its learners receive are a fair and accurate representation of their work, and of the knowledge and skills attained. Plagiarism, and other forms of cheating, undermine the value of qualifications for all concerned because they undermine their credibility. If a learner passes an assessment, or gets a qualification, by unfair means then this is unfair to those who have achieved the same qualification fairly. For these reasons, we will take all appropriate measures to ensure that learner work is in fact their own, and that plagiarism and other forms of cheating have not taken place. We will also take appropriate action where plagiarism is detected.

What is plagiarism?

It is normally defined as the representation of another person's work as your own, without acknowledging the source. It can take the following forms:

- Direct copying from texts without acknowledging your source- e.g. direct quotations should have a full reference and be in inverted commas
- Paraphrasing (rewording) or summarising other people's work without acknowledging your source – you must give the reference from which your summary/paraphrase is taken
- Both of the above points also apply to material taken from the internet – if you use material from the internet you must reference the website from which you obtained the material
- It is the failure to acknowledge others' work/ideas as the source which constitutes plagiarism. You can be guilty of plagiarism even if you did not intend to imply that the work was your own. It should be noted, however, that whether it is intentional or not, plagiarism presents a problem when it interferes with the accurate assessment of a learner's ability

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all learners and staff to ensure that learner work submitted for purposes of assessment, is in fact their own work. The following details the specific responsibilities of learners and various members of staff:

Learners

It is the responsibility of learners:

- To ensure that work submitted for purposes of assessment is their own
- To ensure that the words and arguments of others are appropriately cited and referenced using an accepted referencing system such as the Harvard referencing system

- Learners must not simply copy materials from other learners, past or present, from written sources, from the Internet, or from any other source whether this is through cutting and pasting, rewriting, or by any other means. Changing a few words within a copied piece of text does not render this original and still counts as plagiarism. In short, work submitted by learners must be their own unless it is specifically indicated within the text through appropriate referencing that this is not the case – or where originality was clearly not a requirement of the assessment being undertaken

Teaching & Support staff

It is the responsibility of staff:

- To stress to their learners the unethical nature of plagiarism
- To make clear to learners *Step into Learning's* policy on plagiarism and the consequences if they fail to comply
- To ensure that learners have the knowledge and skills required to enable them to cite and reference appropriately
- To facilitate discussion around plagiarism and related issues
- Coordinate information on learners across the range of their course so as to detect and address multiple instances of plagiarism

Teaching staff can also take preventative action through appropriate design of assessment. This might include, for example:

- More individualised assessments
- The use of question banks rather than static, identical assessment for all learners
- Frequent changing of assessment instruments
- Appropriate supervision

Action on detection of plagiarism

All instances of plagiarism, whether intentional or not, require action. The following provides guidelines on the course of action to be taken by staff. In all cases, the member of staff must take care to ensure that there is indeed clear evidence that plagiarism has taken place.

1. If the plagiarism would have altered the result obtained by the learner if it had been undetected then at the very least the assessment must be retaken by the learner. This will count as a second attempt at the assessment. If the problem arises from a failure on the part of the learner to reference properly, or to understand the requirements of the assessment, then this issue must be addressed before the assessment is retaken.

2. If it is clear that the plagiarism was minor and did not constitute intentional cheating, then guidance and support should be provided to address any underlying issues. This might include revision of appropriate referencing practice. The learner should also be informed clearly of the unacceptability of plagiarism and the need to abide by accepted practice.
3. If the plagiarism is more extensive, but again it is the judgement of the member of staff that this was not intentional cheating, then more extensive action will need to be taken. This might be the case where a learner has answered an assessment simply by cutting and pasting material from the internet, but was unaware that this was an unacceptable way of completing the assessment or was unable to complete the assessment in any other way. Care must be taken in making this judgement as a learner found cheating may well claim a failure to understand rather than deliberate intent. If the case is genuine, then serious attention will need to be paid to whether the learner is actually on the right course, whether there has been a failure of teaching or learning, whether the course content itself needs to be modified in some way, or whether the assessment instructions are unclear. Judgement on these matters will, of course, depend on whether problems being encountered are general or are limited to a single learner.
4. Finally if it is the judgement of the member of staff that this is an instance of genuine cheating, with deliberate intent to deceive, then disciplinary action must be taken. This would result in the learner being invited to a meeting to discuss the disciplinary case and can result in the learner being withdrawn from the current course of study and written confirmation of the reasons being documented and sent to all parties.