



ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, PLAGIARISM AND USE OF AI POLICY

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UK Versity Online Limited | BAC Accredited College | UKPRN 10052768

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Author	Director of Education
Approved by	Principal (Ramanjeet Singh), on behalf of the Academic Board
Approval date	1 October 2026

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism and Use of AI Policy

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Document control

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Effective date	1 October 2026
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Owner	Quality Manager
Author	Director of Education
Approval authority	Academic Board, chaired by the Principal (Ramanjeet Singh)
Approval date	1 October 2026
Applies to	All UK Versity learners submitting work for assessment, and all tutors, assessors, internal quality assurers and administrative staff involved in assessment
Supersedes	Plagiarism and Assessment Malpractice Policy (QA-09, 2014, reviewed to November 2024); AI misuse provisions of the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy (QA-05, May 2026)
Summary	Sets out UK Versity's expectations for honest, properly referenced work, the acceptable and unacceptable use of AI, how submissions are screened and how concerns about authenticity are investigated and resolved.

Compliance mapping

BAC College Scheme 2023 standards	11.7
UK Quality Code 2024 (voluntary)	Principle 11
OfS conditions (benchmark only; not OfS registered)	B4 (benchmark)
Awarding organisations	ATHE; Pearson; OTHM; Ascentis; NCFE; IFA Direct
Legislation and regulation	UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 (as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025); Equality Act 2010; Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition

Version history

Version	Date	Change
1.0	November 2014	First issue as Plagiarism and Assessment Malpractice Policy (QA-09)
3.0	October 2026	Full rebuild: academic integrity and AI use, 20% screening trigger as a review point only, referencing by level, investigation steps, multi-AO alignment, BAC/QAA/OfS mapping, version control

1. Purpose

UK Versity awards credit only for work that shows what the learner knows, understands and can do. This policy explains what academic integrity means at UK Versity, how you must reference your sources, how you may and may not use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, how submitted work is checked, and what happens if there is a concern about the authenticity of your work.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- every learner registered with UK Versity on a regulated qualification at RQF Levels 2 to 8, delivered online through Moodle (lms.ukversity.co.uk) and live Zoom tutor sessions;
- all tutors, assessors, internal quality assurers (IQAs), the Quality Manager and administrative staff who handle learner work.

It covers all assignment-based assessment for qualifications awarded by ATHE (Awarding body for Training and Higher Education), Pearson Education Ltd (Pearson BTEC, including BTEC Higher Nationals), OTHM Qualifications, Ascentis (including Access to HE Diplomas, validated under the QAA Access to HE scheme), NCFE (including qualifications under the NCFE CACHE brand, and NCFE Functional Skills) and Institute of Financial Accountants (IFA) qualifications delivered through IFA Direct, administered in partnership with ATHE.

For learners on Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes, the Pearson HN edition of this policy (v3.0, July 2026) applies and takes precedence where the two differ. The Pearson HN edition is the Use of AI in Assessment Policy (Pearson HN), read with the Pearson HN Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

For NCFE Functional Skills external assessments, the companion policy UKV-NCFE-FS-P-01 Plagiarism, Malpractice and Examination Conduct Policy v1.0 (18 September 2026) applies.

Suspected malpractice that is serious, deliberate or repeated is investigated under UKV-QA-20 Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure.

3. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Academic integrity	Producing your own work honestly, acknowledging all sources and following the rules set for each assessment.
Plagiarism	Presenting someone else's words, ideas, data, images or other work as your own without proper acknowledgement. This includes copying, close paraphrasing without citation, and "patch writing" that stitches together unattributed text from several sources.
Collusion	Unauthorised collaboration with another learner or any other person that results in work presented as individual effort, or in near-identical submissions from more than one learner. Allowing another learner to copy your work is also collusion.
Contract cheating	Arranging for another person or service (paid or unpaid), including essay-writing websites and essay banks, to produce all or part of an assessment that you then submit as your own.

Term	Meaning
Self-plagiarism	Resubmitting work you have already submitted for credit, in this or another qualification or at another institution, without the assessor's permission and without acknowledging it.
Fabrication	Inventing or falsifying data, quotations, case study details, results, workplace evidence or references, including references that do not exist or do not say what is claimed.
AI misuse	Using an AI tool (for example a chatbot, paraphrasing tool, translation tool, code or image generator) in a way that this policy or the assignment brief does not permit, or without acknowledging it, so that the submission no longer shows your own knowledge and skills.
Authenticity discussion	A recorded online conversation (viva) in which you explain how you produced your work, its content and its sources.

4. Policy statement

1. All work submitted for assessment must be your own, produced for that assessment, and must acknowledge every source you have used.
2. UK Versity does not ban AI tools. They may be used in the limited ways set out in section 5, provided you acknowledge that use and the work still shows your own understanding against the assessment criteria.
3. Unacknowledged AI-generated content is treated as plagiarism. Content produced by AI cannot be credited as evidence that you have met the assessment criteria.
4. Every submission is screened with GPTZero (AI detection) and a plagiarism checker before it is marked.
5. A combined AI and plagiarism score above 20% is a centre-set screening trigger for review. This level was accepted by the OTHM Qualifications external quality assurer in September 2026. No awarding organisation publishes a percentage threshold, and a detection score is never on its own the basis for a malpractice finding.
6. Judgements about authenticity are holistic. They take account of the detection reports, an authenticity discussion, drafts and version history, and consistency with your known writing voice and level. The standard of proof is the balance of probabilities.
7. Outcomes are proportionate. A first case of poor academic practice is treated as a learning issue. Deliberate, serious or repeated cases are referred to UKV-QA-20.
8. For Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes no percentage trigger is used under this policy; the Pearson HN edition applies.

5. Use of AI tools

5.1 Acceptable use (must be acknowledged)

Unless the assignment brief says otherwise, you may use AI tools to:

- generate ideas, mind maps or a list of topics to research, which you then research and write up yourself;
- explain a concept you do not understand, as you might use a textbook, before checking it against reliable sources;
- plan the structure of your answer, provided the content is your own;

- check spelling and grammar in text you have written, without rewriting its meaning;
- use assistive technology agreed as a reasonable adjustment under UKV-QA-18.

Example: you ask a chatbot to explain the difference between transformational and transactional leadership, then read two textbooks and a journal article, and write your own comparison with Harvard citations to those sources. You note the chatbot use in your AI declaration. This is acceptable.

5.2 Unacceptable use

The following are AI misuse and are not permitted:

1. **Unacknowledged use:** submitting AI-generated or AI-rewritten content without declaring it.
2. **Over-reliance:** using AI to do the analysis, evaluation, reflection, calculations or other tasks that the assessment criteria require you to show.
3. **Disguising content:** using paraphrasing or "humaniser" tools to alter AI or copied text so that it avoids detection.
4. **Misleading references:** submitting references produced by AI that you have not read, that do not exist, or that do not support your point.
5. **Unauthorised use:** using AI where the assignment brief prohibits it.
6. **No own contribution:** submitting AI answers without your own contribution, review and checking.
7. **False declaration:** signing an authenticity declaration when the work has been substantially produced by AI.

Example: you paste the task into a chatbot, run the answer through a paraphrasing tool and submit it with the references it produced. This is AI misuse, plagiarism and fabrication.

5.3 Acknowledging AI use

If you use AI in any way that section 5.1 allows, you must:

1. complete the AI use section of the learner declaration, naming the tool, the date used and what you used it for;
2. keep a copy of your prompts and the AI output, and supply them if asked;
3. where you quote or closely draw on AI output, show it in quotation marks and cite the tool in your reference list (for example: OpenAI (2026) ChatGPT, response to prompt about leadership styles, 12 October 2026).

AI output is not an academic source. You must check facts against reliable sources and cite those sources.

6. Referencing expectations

UK Versity uses the Harvard referencing style for all qualifications. You receive the Guide to Citing and Referencing at induction and it is available on Moodle.

Level	What we expect
RQF Level 2 (including Functional Skills)	Put copied words in quotation marks and name where they came from. A simple list of sources at the end is normally enough. NCFE Functional Skills learners follow UKV-NCFE-FS-P-01.
RQF Level 3 and Access to HE	In-text Harvard citations (author, year) for quotations and paraphrased ideas, and a reference list in Harvard format. Use textbooks, reputable organisations and official publications.

Level	What we expect
RQF Levels 4 and 5	Consistent Harvard citations throughout and a full reference list. Draw on a range of academic and professional sources, including textbooks, journal articles, legislation and official guidance, and show that you have interpreted them.
RQF Levels 6, 7 and 8	Accurate, consistent Harvard referencing. A wide range of current sources, including peer-reviewed journals, used critically to support analysis and evaluation. Reference lists that are brief or out of date do not meet the expected standard at these levels.

At every level:

- use a wide range of sources suitable for the level, not one or two websites;
- do not use essay-bank or essay-mill websites such as UKEssays as sources. They are not academic sources and may be treated as a sign of contract cheating;
- every in-text citation must appear in the reference list, and every item in the reference list must be cited in the text.

Assessors give feedback on the quality of referencing and on the range of sources, and point you to further support where needed.

7. Screening procedure

1. You submit work through Moodle or to learnerwork@ukversity.co.uk, with a signed learner authenticity declaration. Work without a signed declaration is not marked.
2. Before marking, the assessor runs the submission through GPTZero and the plagiarism checker and saves both reports to the learner's assessment record.
3. If the combined AI and plagiarism score is 20% or below and the assessor has no other concern, the assessor records on the marking sheet that the scores are within the centre threshold and marks the work.
4. If the combined score is above 20%, or the assessor has another concern whatever the score, the assessor does not confirm any criteria and refers the work to the IQA for the programme or the Quality Manager within 2 working days.
5. Other concerns include: a sudden change in writing style or quality, generic or formulaic content that does not address the brief, references that cannot be traced, content that closely matches another learner's work, and spelling, vocabulary or terminology that is inconsistent with your other work.
6. Detection reports are shared with awarding organisations on request. For ATHE, the plagiarism report is attached to the learner's work for sampling at external quality assurance.

8. Investigation procedure

When work is referred under section 7, the IQA or Quality Manager (the reviewer) follows these steps.

1. **Initial review.** The reviewer examines the reports and the work against the learner's previous submissions. If the concern is resolved (for example, the similarity comes from a correctly referenced quotation or the assignment template), the work is returned for marking and the decision recorded.
2. **Notify the learner.** If the concern remains, the reviewer writes to you, explaining the concern, sharing the detection reports and asking you to provide your drafts, notes, research sources, AI prompts and outputs, and the version history of your document (for example from Microsoft Word or Google Docs).

3. **Authenticity discussion.** You are invited to a recorded authenticity discussion on Zoom, normally within 10 working days of the notification. The reviewer and, where possible, a second member of staff ask you to explain your work, your sources and how you produced it. You may be accompanied by a supporter, and reasonable adjustments are made on request.
4. **Decision.** The reviewer weighs all the evidence on the balance of probabilities. A detection score is never the only reason for a finding.
5. **Outcome.** You are told the outcome in writing, with reasons, and how to appeal. The outcomes are set out in section 9.

If you do not engage, the reviewer decides on the evidence available. Work that cannot be authenticated is not assessed.

9. Outcomes

Situation	Outcome
No concern substantiated	Work is marked as normal. No record is kept against you.
First case of poor academic practice (for example weak paraphrasing, missing citations, undeclared use of AI for grammar or planning) with no evidence of intent to deceive	Treated as an academic skills issue. You receive feedback, are directed to the Guide to Citing and Referencing and the assignment submission guidance, and may resubmit corrected work under UKV-QA-17 Resubmission and Reassessment Policy. The case is logged.
Repeat poor practice after feedback, or substantial unacknowledged use of AI or copied material	Referred to the Quality Manager for investigation under UKV-QA-20.
Deliberate plagiarism, collusion, contract cheating, fabrication, false declaration or impersonation	Referred to UKV-QA-20 as suspected learner malpractice.

Sanctions for proven malpractice, and notification to awarding organisations, are set out in UKV-QA-20. You may appeal any decision under this policy through UKV-QA-23 Appeals Policy and Procedure.

10. Learner declarations

For every submission you confirm that:

- the work is your own and has been produced for this assessment;
- all sources are acknowledged using Harvard referencing;
- any AI use is declared, with the tool, date and purpose;
- you have not colluded with anyone or used a contract cheating or essay-bank service;
- you understand that false declaration is malpractice.

Assessors also confirm authenticity when signing off assessment decisions.

11. Staff duties

- Tutors teach referencing and this policy at induction and in live sessions, and remind learners before each submission.
- Assessors design and use assignment briefs that include the centre's standard academic integrity and AI statement, and use personalised tasks (case studies, workplace reflection, learner's own organisation) that reduce the scope for misuse.

- Assessors screen every submission as set out in section 7 and do not confirm criteria on work under review.
- Staff must not upload learner work to AI tools other than the approved detection tools, which are used in line with UKV-QA-29 Data Protection and Records Retention Policy.
- IQAs check that screening reports are present and that referrals were handled correctly when sampling.
- All assessors and IQAs take part in annual standardisation on academic integrity and AI.

12. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Learner	Meets sections 5, 6 and 10; co-operates with any authenticity discussion.
Tutor / Assessor	Carries out the duties in section 11.
Internal Quality Assurer	Conducts initial reviews and authenticity discussions; checks screening evidence when sampling.
Quality Manager and Lead IQA	Owns this policy, oversees referrals, decides on escalation to UKV-QA-20, keeps the academic integrity log, liaises with awarding organisations.
Course Coordinator	Keeps the Guide to Citing and Referencing, AI guidance and declarations current on Moodle.
Principal and Director of Education	Approves this policy and receives annual reports on academic integrity.

13. Awarding organisation requirements

AO	Requirement / escalation route	Source document
ATHE	Unacknowledged generative AI content is plagiarism. The plagiarism report is attached to the learner's work for sampling at EQA. Proven malpractice is reported under UKV-QA-20.	ATHE Malpractice and Maladministration Policy (2023)
OTHM	Centre must have a written AI policy and learner authenticity declarations. A detector probability is not proof and must never be the sole basis for a malpractice finding; standard of proof is balance of probabilities.	OTHM Managing Use of AI in Assessment v2.0 (September 2026)
Pearson	Follows JCQ guidance on AI use in assessments. Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals: the Pearson HN edition applies.	JCQ AI Use in Assessments (current edition)
NCFE	Follows JCQ AI guidance. Functional Skills external assessments are covered by UKV-NCFE-FS-P-01.	JCQ AI Use in Assessments (current edition); UKV-NCFE-FS-P-01 v1.0
Ascentis	Ascentis must be notified of plagiarism cases. The Quality Manager notifies Ascentis in line with the Centre Agreement.	Ascentis Centre Agreement (April 2026)
IFA Direct	Administered in partnership with ATHE; ATHE requirements above apply.	ATHE Malpractice and Maladministration Policy (2023)

14. Related policies and legislation

- UKV-QA-15 Assessment Policy
- UKV-QA-16 Internal Quality Assurance Policy and Procedure
- UKV-QA-17 Resubmission and Reassessment Policy
- UKV-QA-18 Reasonable Adjustments, Special Consideration and Mitigating Circumstances Policy
- UKV-QA-20 Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure
- UKV-QA-23 Appeals Policy and Procedure
- UKV-QA-29 Data Protection and Records Retention Policy
- UKV-NCFE-FS-P-01 Plagiarism, Malpractice and Examination Conduct Policy (NCFE Functional Skills) v1.0
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025
- Equality Act 2010
- Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
- JCQ AI Use in Assessments (current edition)

15. Monitoring and review

The Quality Manager keeps an academic integrity log of every referral, outcome and escalation, and reviews screening scores sampled at IQA. The Quality Manager reports to the Academic Board at least annually on the number and type of cases, outcomes, trends by programme and level, and any EQA comments on authenticity and referencing. Where many submissions approach the screening trigger, the Quality Manager arranges additional referencing and AI guidance for learners.

This policy is reviewed annually by September, and earlier if awarding organisation or JCQ guidance on AI changes, an EQA action requires it, or detection tools change. Screening reports and assessment records are kept for at least 3 years after certification. Investigation records that are referred under UKV-QA-20 are kept for at least 5 years.

Approval and review

Stage	Name and role	Date
Prepared by	Director of Education	30 September 2026
Checked by (policy owner)	Quality Manager	30 September 2026
Approved by	Ramanjeet Singh, Principal and Director of Education, on behalf of the Academic Board	1 October 2026
Next review due	Quality Manager (Shazia Khan) to schedule through the Policy Register UKV-QA-REG	September 2027