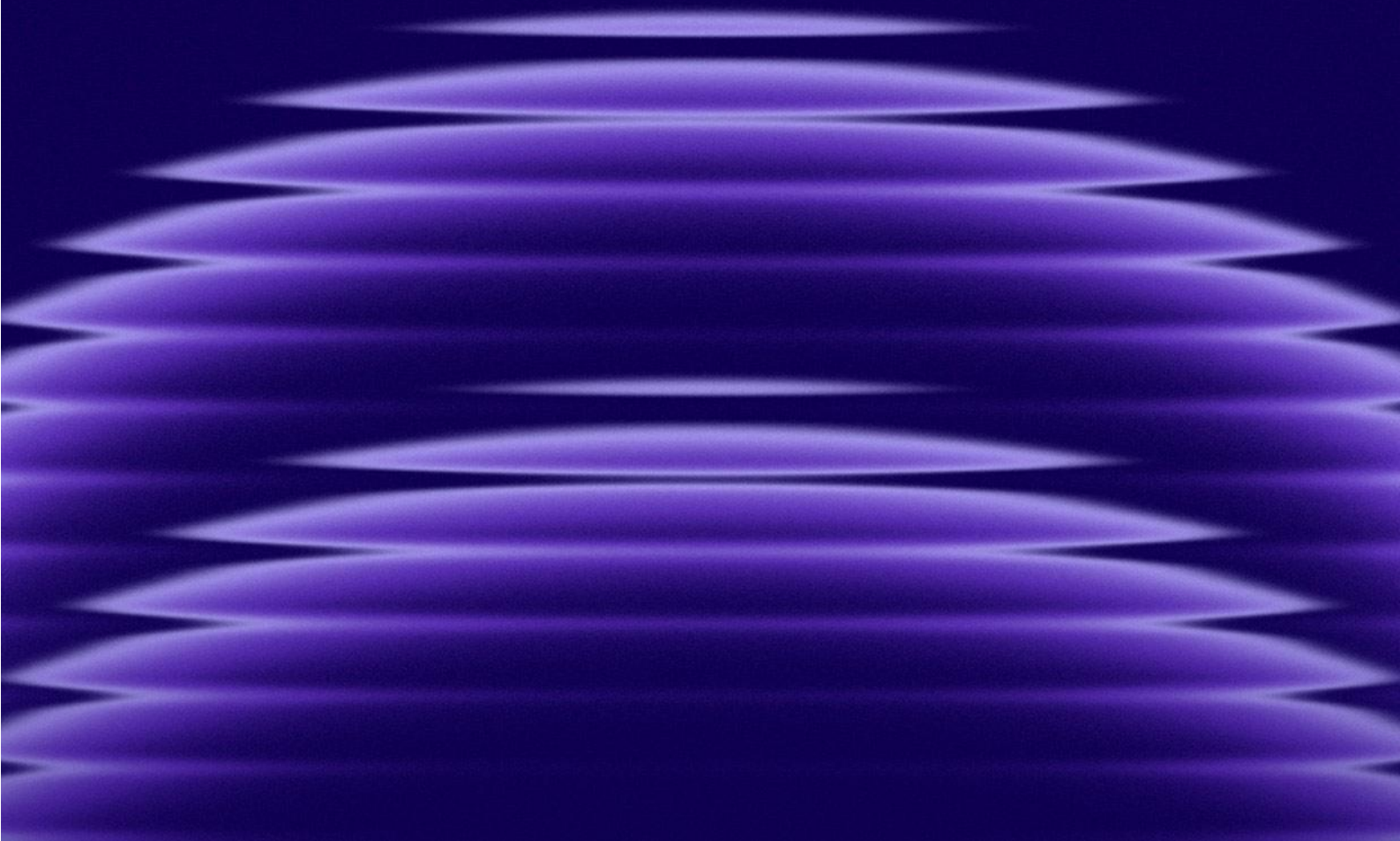
Pearson

BTEC Centre Guide to Plagiarism

2025 - 2026



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Introduction

Plagiarism is when someone tries to pass off another person's work and ideas as their own.

Plagiarism can include:

- Copying from another student, books, AI tools, or the internet.
- Paraphrasing without giving credit.
- Getting someone else to do the work.

Why is plagiarism a big deal?

- It goes against good academic practice.
- It is dishonest and disrespectful to the assessor, the centre, and other students.
- It gives an unfair advantage over others.
- If undetected, it could devalue the qualification and undermine public confidence in the qualification system.

What are the consequences if someone plagiarises?

- Those who commit plagiarism learn much less than those who don't.
- It compromises the assessment process because the work isn't theirs.
- Assessors can't make accurate decisions about their progress.
- They might face legal action for copyright infringement.
- They could be penalised, such as being disqualified from the qualification.

Why do people plagiarise? There are many reasons, such as:

- Not understanding what plagiarism is because it was never explained.
- Lacking the skills to properly reference and cite sources.
- Not thinking plagiarism is wrong because they download music, videos, and games all the time.
- Not knowing how to use AI tools correctly.
- Confusing intellectual property rights with common knowledge.
- Thinking academic documentation rules don't apply to them.
- Lacking the study, research, and writing skills needed.
- Believing that plagiarism and AI misuse won't be detected.
- Seeing plagiarism as a shortcut to success.
- Using plagiarism to quickly produce work when they don’t think they have enough time to do it themselves.

Policies and procedures needed to address assessment malpractice

These policies are all about:

- Making it easier for everyone to identify and minimise the risk of malpractice, whether staff or students
- Making sure any suspected malpractice gets dealt with quickly and fairly
- Keeping all investigations organised, open and recorded so everything's clear
- Reporting all alleged, suspected, and actual incidents of malpractice to Pearson
- Protecting the integrity of the delivery centre and BTEC qualifications

To support you in the creation of your assessment malpractice policies, please see the below links.

Centre Guidance: Dealing with Malpractice and Maladministration

Malpractice - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications

Plagiarism in Assessments - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications

AI Use in Assessments: Your role in protecting the integrity of qualifications - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications

BTEC Centre Guide to Policies and Procedures

Artificial Intelligence (AI) use in assessments

While AI is a relatively new tool for students, most of the steps needed to prevent misuse and manage risks are already familiar. Centres should already have processes in place to help students understand the importance of submitting their own work and to identify any potential malpractice. The JCQ guidance reminds teachers and assessors of best practice in this area, applying it in the context of AI use.

Key points from JCQ guidance

- Students must submit work that is entirely their own, as outlined in section 5.3(k) of the JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres.
- If AI is used in a way that means the work is no longer the student's own, it will be treated as malpractice and could lead to serious consequences.
- Both students and staff need to understand the risks of using AI and be clear on what counts as malpractice.
- Students must make sure that work submitted for assessment is demonstrably their own. If students include content generated by AI, they must clearly identify it - they must understand that this will not allow them to demonstrate that they have independently met the marking criteria and therefore will not be rewarded
- If teachers suspect that a student's work isn't authentic—for example, if AI was used but not acknowledged—they must investigate and take appropriate action.

AI tools should only be used when the assessment allows internet access and when students can show the work is genuinely theirs. JCQ (2025) gives examples of AI misuse, including:

- copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the student's own.
- copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content.
- using AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the student's own work, analysis, evaluation, or calculations.
- failing to acknowledge use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information.
- incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools.
- submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies.

Helping students use AI responsibly

Referencing matters
Students must acknowledge when they've used AI. Page 7 of the JCQ guidance for teachers and assessors offers helpful advice that centres can share with students. This can be introduced during induction and revisited throughout the course.

Encouraging reflective use
AI can be used in a way that helps students think critically about when and how it's appropriate to use—and how it supports their learning goals.

Clarifying assessment expectations
Involving students in setting learning goals, while discussing the role of AI, helps them understand when it's appropriate to use AI as a learning tool. For example:

- **Checking progress:** AI can help identify areas where students need to improve and suggest tailored resources.
- **Personalised learning:** AI can recommend different types of materials—like videos or articles—based on how each student learns best.
- **Instant feedback:** AI can offer real-time feedback, so students know where they're going wrong and how to fix it.
- **Collaborative learning:** AI can be used to create collaborative digital environments, meaning students can work together. AI can then act as a moderator, suggesting resources, assisting project management, and giving feedback on performance.

Rethinking assessment formats
Good assessment practice includes giving students different ways to show what they've learned—such as discussions, presentations, or videos. Centres may want to consider: are there other authentic ways to assess student learning?

Case Study: AI Integration

Bridgend College have kindly shared their approach to integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance teaching, learning, and operational efficiency. Appendix B offers concise guidance on fostering responsible AI use and upholding academic integrity, outlining practical approaches for both educators and students. It provides actionable strategies that support ethical learning, effective referencing, and authentic assessment, reinforcing the centre's commitment to a transparent, supportive educational environment.

Creating a culture where plagiarism isn't an option

The best way to tackle plagiarism is to build a learning environment where students simply don't see it as an option.

Here's how the centre team can help make that happen:

- Set out clear policies and procedures around plagiarism and academic misconduct from the start.
- Make sure students understand what plagiarism is during induction—and how it'll be monitored throughout the course.
- Early in the course, talk through ideas like owning your own work, respecting digital content, and the difference between intellectual property and common knowledge.
- Teach essential skills like research, writing, time management, and how to use a referencing system properly.
- Get students using references and bibliographies from day one.
- Work as a team—every assessor should apply the centre's rules on referencing and bibliographies consistently.
- Avoid use of highly generic assignments. Instead, design tasks that are tailored to the subject and encourage students to research, analyse and evaluate independently.
- Include an authenticity statement with every assignment. Students must sign and date it to confirm the work is their own and that they understand the consequences of plagiarism.
- Provide opportunities for students to talk about any challenges they're facing. Support them throughout and make sure they have the resources they need to succeed.
- Don't overload students. Share an agreed assessment schedule with them—and stick to it as a team.
- Consider demonstrating the limitations and errors associated with AI tools (e.g. hallucinations).

How to identify plagiarism

The best defence against plagiarism is the expertise of individual assessors, supported by technology where available.

There are several signs assessors can look out for when reviewing student work:

- Use of words or phrases that seem unfamiliar or out of place.
- Grammar and sentence structure that's noticeably more advanced than the student's usual standard.
- Sudden improvements in the quality or accuracy of the work.
- Use of texts or sources the assessor recognises, but without proper referencing.
- American spellings or unfamiliar product names that don't match the student's usual style.
- Lots of verbose language.

Additional steps assessors can take:

- Include a spoken element in assessments where appropriate—such as a short presentation or Q&A—to check the student's understanding.
- Ask students to elaborate on any parts of their work that seem suspicious.
- Run a few phrases through a search engine like Google—simple but often effective.
- Use plagiarism detection tools such as Turnitin, Google Classroom, Originality Reports, or other platforms the centre may already use.
- Familiarise with common essay banks or ghost-writing services that are easily found online.
- Pay closer attention to students who perform well in coursework but struggle with exams or tests.
- Share concerns with colleagues. If multiple staff members have doubts about a student's work, it's reasonable to apply more thorough checks.

Whilst we do not recommend any specific AI plagiarism detection applications, there are some available that can be used to help detect the use of AI tools. However, this should always be in line with your centres GDPR policies and procedures to prevent the sharing of student's personal information.

Internal assessment rules & marking

Students can use AI and other sources to help with their assessments—but only when it's done properly. If AI is used without being acknowledged, or in a way that undermines the integrity of the assessment or prevents the student from showing their own understanding, it becomes misuse—and that's considered malpractice.

BTEC assessment rules are clear: all work must be authentic. Students are required to sign a declaration of authenticity when they submit their work.

What centres need to do

- **Only mark what's authentic:** Assessors should award criteria only for the parts of the work they believe are genuinely the student's own. If an AI detection tool is used, JCQ guidance states it must support—not replace—human judgement.
- **Don't mark questionable content:** If any part of the work seems copied from AI or another source or not in the student's own words, it shouldn't be marked.
- **Record clearly:** Use the assessment record template to show which criteria have been awarded and which haven't. In the general comments section, explain why certain criteria weren't awarded—include page numbers and details that is subject to a malpractice investigation.
- **Investigate concerns:** If authenticity is in doubt, assessors can ask the student questions about the section or request a short explanation in writing. This isn't extra evidence—it's just to confirm whether plagiarism has occurred.
- **Report confirmed cases:** If the internal investigation confirms any suspected malpractice, including plagiarism, and the declaration of authentication has been completed by the student, this must be reported to Pearson.

Resubmissions and retakes

If work submitted is found to be inauthentic, the student may be given a resubmission and/or retake opportunity where the following criteria have been met:

- The student has met initial deadlines set in the assignment or has met an agreed deadline extension.
- The assessor judges that the student will be able to produce improved evidence without further guidance.
- The student and assessor have completed a declaration of authentication.

It is important to note that outcomes from Pearson's investigation into the initial reported malpractice may vary, ranging from a formal warning to disqualification from the unit and/or overall qualification. This can impact the eligibility of completed resubmissions and retakes. For more FAQ related to resubmissions, see our centre guide to BTEC internal assessment from page 17.

Reporting plagiarism and AI misuse

If there is something unusual in a student's internally assessed work **before** they've signed the declaration of authenticity, there's no need to report it to Pearson. Instead, the centre should follow its own academic misconduct or malpractice policy to resolve the issue. This should include making sure students understand:

- What malpractice is and how to avoid it
- How to reference sources properly
- How to acknowledge the use of AI tools

If the irregularity is found after the student has signed the declaration—or if there's suspected malpractice during an external assessment—the centre must report it to Pearson. This should be done as soon as possible by emailing the completed JCQ Form M1 and any supporting documents to:

candidatemalpractice@pearson.com

Pearson will review the case and, if needed, apply a sanction in line with the JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures (https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/).

Sanctions for plagiarism and falsely signing the declaration of authenticity can range from a warning to full disqualification.

For examples of how AI misuse has been handled, see Appendix B: Misuse examples at the end of the document.

If you have a question, please contact BTEC assessment or your vocational quality assurance manager via the Pearson support portal.

Appendix A: Case study: AI integration across Pearson provision

Bridgend College

Introduction

Bridgend College is a Further Education (FE) College who offer a diverse range of courses from pre-entry to degree level in over 20 vocational areas, working in partnership with local employers and organisations to meet community needs. This case study outlines Bridgend College's journey in integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance teaching, learning, and operational efficiency across Pearson provision.

Background and strategic approach

The College is proactively exploring the potential of AI's to support and enhance curriculum delivery and has led on various projects over the past few years.

Cross-Wales funded projects: The college has led two Trailblazer projects funded by Medr, the body responsible for funding and overseeing post-16 education and research in Wales. The first involved creating a new AI-powered learner app and the second led the creation of supportive resources for the post-16 sector in Wales around effective and ethical use of AI.

Innovation and staff development: The college led a dedicated Professional Learning Day focused on AI in July 2024, and delivered follow-up sessions exploring themes of Academic Integrity, Personalised Learning, Ethics, and Saving Time. These face-to-face sessions are supported by e-learning modules which may be taken by any member of staff, at any time via the college's in-house electronic platform, Dysgu (a Welsh word that means both 'to learn' and 'to teach').

Compliance: Bridgend College encourages appropriate and ethical use of AI by learners and staff in such a way that does not jeopardise the academic integrity of learner work. The college's comprehensive *Malpractice, Maladministration and Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedure* makes specific and detailed reference to the use of AI, and outlines that use of AI to generate assessment material which is subsequently presented as original learner work constitutes malpractice. The policy also directs learners and staff to the latest version of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance on AI and assessment. Further training and guidance is currently being developed for the 2025/26 academic year to support learners and staff successfully navigate an approach to AI use that is both innovative and compliant.

Implementing AI in teaching and learning: examples

Staff across the college utilise AI tools within their everyday practice to create dynamic learning experiences and streamline student workflows, some of which are included in the case studies outlined below. The scenarios below give two examples of how teachers are integrating the positive use of AI into lessons. The use of AI is a learning tool only.

AI-powered anatomy and physiology simulation:

Challenge: A lecturer on the Pearson BTEC Level 3 Sports Coaching and Development provision needed an interactive tool for students to explore scenarios involving blood sugar levels and hormone regulation, but suitable online options were unavailable.

Solution: Using Google Gemini, the lecturer created a bespoke simulator.

AI use: The lecturer wrote the following prompt and put it on Google Classroom (the College VLE) for the students to copy and paste into Gemini for themselves:

You are a simulator designed to mimic the effects of glucoregulation on the human body to help me learn about the hormonal control of blood sugar in the body. Begin the simulation by describing the key roles of the hormones insulin and glucagon with me. When I am ready to begin, present a scenario that involves the blood sugar levels either going up or down. Ask me to identify which, if any, hormone should be released, and how much hormone should be released (on a scale of 1 to 3, tell me that 1 is a small amount and 3 is a large amount). Identify what effect my decision has had on the body and then continue the scenario, asking for my input as to how the body should respond each time. Allow me to make mistakes, even if that ultimately ends with the simulated body dying or becoming seriously unwell. Use language appropriate to a 16-year-old, and explain terminology in simple terms when asked to. If the conversation is diverted to ask a question, return to the simulation once you have answered the query.

In this case, this wasn't used to build evidence directly for an assignment, but for formative learning during class time. The session was structured so that learners could experiment with the Gemini prompts and discuss the output from the tool with their peers and the lecturer.

Outcome: Students found the AI simulator engaging and appreciated the novel, interactive approach to learning a complex subject, benefiting from direct interaction and immediate feedback.

Streamlining research with NotebookLM:

Challenge: A learner undertaking Pearson BTEC Level 3 Information Technology provision struggled with managing and organising large volumes of research information using traditional methods.

Solution: Lecturers have placed class notes into NotebookLM and shared with learners how to produce key concepts study guides. The AI produces a podcast based on the material inputted.

AI use: Learners then use the podcast tool as a way of listening to the material to answer quiz questions. The lecturer of the learner in this case study also encouraged learners to place their own notes in and then use it to create their own glossary of terms and quiz questions to enhance their understanding.

The tool also allowed the student to generate podcasts from their notes for revision.

Outcome: The student used Gemini for source gathering and NotebookLM to summarise the information. NotebookLM efficiently drew out key concepts from multiple documents into concise summaries and compiled them into an organised repository. NotebookLM significantly improved the student's research efficiency, allowing more time for analysis. The podcast feature offered a flexible learning method.

Future direction

Bridgend College will continue to strategically integrate AI, balancing compliance and innovation. Key plans include enhancing the AI-powered student app with further integrations and multilingual capabilities and continuing to empower staff and students through targeted training and resources.

The college is committed to exploring new AI applications to improve learning and operational efficiency, sharing best practices and ensuring AI adoption aligns with its core values.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Dr Morgan and Dr Flay-Petty for their valuable contribution of Appendix A, whose expertise and insights have helped clarify best practices for AI integration across their Pearson provision.

Appendix B: AI misuse and marking

The following example illustrates how the JCQ AI Use in Assessments document can be applied by teachers and assessors when students have not met the marking criteria independently, as indicated on page 8: "b) Students are also reminded that if they use AI, they have not independently met the marking criteria and therefore will not be rewarded." The example below shows a learner who has not met the assessment criteria independently due to their over reliance on AI tools.

Awarding Body: Pearson
Qualification: BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Business

A student has produced work for unit 1: Exploring Business. The student has produced work of a good standard in which they have compared two different businesses in some depth. The candidate has used a range of sources and AI tools which have been appropriately cited within the work. In the work the student has assessed the relationship with stakeholders by the two companies, analysed the two organisations' structures, discussed the effects of the business environment on the companies – including their response to recent and potential future changes in the market, and reviewed the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in the success of one of the companies.

The assessor to whom the work has been submitted carefully reviews the assessment criteria for unit 1, which are as follows:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Assessment Criteria</th></tr>
<tr><th>Pass</th><th>Merit</th><th>Distinction</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Learning Aim A: Explore the features of different businesses and analyse what makes them successful</td></tr>
<tr><td>A.P1 Explain the features of two contrasting businesses.</td><td rowspan="2">A.M1 Assess the relationship and communication with stakeholders of two contrasting businesses using independent research</td><td rowspan="4">AB.D1 Evaluate the reasons for the success of two contrasting businesses, reflecting on evidence gathered.</td></tr>
<tr><td>A.P2 Explain how two contrasting businesses are influenced by stakeholders.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Learning aim B: Investigate how businesses are organised</td></tr>
<tr><td>B.P3 Explore the organisation structures, aims and objectives of two contrasting businesses.</td><td>B.M2 Analyse how the structures of two contrasting businesses allow each to achieve its aims and objectives.</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Assessment Criteria</th></tr>
<tr><th>Pass</th><th>Merit</th><th>Distinction</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Learning aim C: Examine the environment in which businesses operate</td></tr>
<tr><td>C.P4 Discuss the effect of internal, external, and competitive environment on a given business.</td><td rowspan="2">C.M3 Assess the effects of the business environment on a given business.</td><td rowspan="3">C.D2 Evaluate the extent to which the business environment affects a given business, using a variety of situational analysis techniques.

D.D3 Evaluate how changes in the market have impacted on a given business and how this business may react to future changes.</td></tr>
<tr><td>C.P5 Select a variety of techniques to undertake a situational analysis of a given business.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Learning aim D: Examine business markets</td></tr>
<tr><td>D.P6 Explore how the market structure and influences on supply and demand affect the pricing and output decisions for a given business.</td><td>D.M4 Assess how a given business has responded to changes in the market.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Learning aim E: Examine the environment in which businesses operate</td></tr>
<tr><td>E.P7 Explore how innovation and enterprise contribute to the success of a business.</td><td>E.M5 Analyse how successful the use of innovation and enterprise has been for a given business</td><td>E.D4 Justify the use of innovation and enterprise for a business in relation to its changing market and environment</td></tr>
</table>

The assessor is content that the work meets all Pass, Merit and Distinction criteria. However, the assessor is aware that in the section in which the student discusses how one of the businesses might react to future changes in the business environment, the student has relied upon the use of an AI tool (appropriately acknowledged, with the input and output from the AI tool submitted together with the assignment) and has not independently demonstrated their own understanding beyond this. The assessor therefore cannot award criterion D.D3 and, as the work has not met all Distinction assessment criteria (which is required to achieve an overall Distinction grade), the work is awarded a Merit grade overall.

The assessor ensures this decision regarding the student's AI use and its impact on marking is clearly recorded. This provides feedback to the student and provides clarity in the event of an internal appeal, or the work being selected for standards verification.