

Plagiarism and Malpractice Policy

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations.

Approved / reviewed by:	
WSL SLT	
Date of last review:	September 2026
Date of next review:	September 2027 (or as appropriate)

1. Purpose and scope

Work Skills Learning has an obligation to awarding organisations, learners, members, funders and society to ensure that the qualifications its learners receive are a fair and accurate representation of their work, knowledge and skills. Plagiarism and other malpractice undermine the value and credibility of qualifications for everyone, including those who achieved the same qualification fairly. WSL will therefore take appropriate measures to ensure that learners' work is their own and that plagiarism and malpractice do not take place. Where either is suspected or detected, action will be taken in line with this policy and awarding organisation requirements.

This policy applies to all learners, and to all WSL staff, tutors, assessors and internal quality assurers (IQAs), on all programmes and assessments.

2. Definitions

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work, words, ideas or data as your own, whether deliberately or by failing to acknowledge sources properly. It can be difficult to tell deliberate plagiarism from poor referencing, so WSL treats each case on its facts (see section 6).

Malpractice is any act, or attempted act, that breaches assessment rules or undermines the integrity of an assessment or qualification. This includes plagiarism, and the examples in section 3.

3. What counts as plagiarism and malpractice

Plagiarism

- Copying word for word from a book, website, article, journal, another learner or any other source and presenting it as your own. You may use such material if it is clearly identified as a quotation in the body of your work and fully referenced in your bibliography.
- Paraphrasing without acknowledgement. Restating another writer's ideas in your own words is acceptable only if you cite the source. Changing a few words in copied text does not make it original and still counts as plagiarism.
- Copying diagrams, charts, images or other documents without a reference at the foot of the item and an entry in your bibliography.
- Using generative AI tools (such as chatbots or text, image or code generators) to produce work and submitting it as your own, unless the assessment brief explicitly permits it and you declare how it was used.

Other learner malpractice (not exhaustive)

- Collusion: preparing work for an individual assessment jointly with others unless the assessment brief explicitly permits it; actively assisting others, or allowing others to access your completed work before submission, and submitting it as your own.
- Impersonation: taking on another person's identity to produce their work, or arranging for someone to take your place in an assessment.
- Falsification: inventing, altering or falsifying evidence, records, signatures, witness statements or results.
- Using purchased or commissioned work (for example from an essay mill or another person) as your own.

- Misusing assessment materials: obtaining, sharing or publishing assessment materials or answers without authorisation.

4. Responsibilities

Work Skills Learning will

- Make this policy available to all staff and learners, including on [learner portal / website] and on request from the office.
- Ensure all tutors, assessors and IQAs receive a copy and are kept updated through regular meetings and standardisation.
- Provide information, support and guidance on preventing plagiarism and malpractice and on correct referencing.
- Ensure learners have access to referencing guidance (*Guidance on Referencing your Work*, in the Resources for your Courses section)
- Take appropriate action where plagiarism or malpractice is suspected or detected.

Teachers and assessors will

- Explain to learners what plagiarism and malpractice are, the WSL policy, and the consequences if detected.
- Make sure learners know about the resources available to help them reference correctly.
- Report any suspected plagiarism or malpractice promptly under section 6.

Learners must

- Ensure that work submitted for assessment is their own.
- Ensure that the words, ideas and arguments of others are cited and referenced correctly.
- Declare any permitted use of AI tools as the assessment brief requires.
- Ask their tutor if they are unsure what is allowed.

5. Preventing plagiarism and malpractice

- Learners are told about this policy at induction and again before their first assessment.
- Assessment briefs state clearly whether group work or AI tools are permitted.
- Assessors use authenticity checks appropriate to the qualification, such as questioning learners about their work, comparing it with previous work, and plagiarism-detection software where available.
- Assessment materials are stored and shared securely.

6. Procedure when plagiarism or malpractice is suspected or detected

6.1 Reporting

1. Any member of staff who suspects plagiarism or malpractice must report it to SLT immediately.
2. The Head of Centre will record the case, review the evidence, and, where needed, speak to the learner and the assessor. The learner will be told what is alleged and given a fair opportunity to respond.
3. The Head of Centre will decide the outcome and tell the learner in writing within five working

days of the decision.

6.2 Assessing the case

The Head of Centre will decide whether the case is:

- Minor or unintentional, such as inadequate referencing where there is no clear intent to deceive; or
- Serious or intentional, such as impersonation, falsification, buying or commissioning work, wholesale copying, or knowingly misusing AI.

6.3 First case: minor or unintentional

- The assessment is referred: it is not accepted as passed and the learner must resubmit. Two resubmission attempts are allowed in line with the awarding organisation's rules.
- The assessor gives written feedback, in consultation with the Head of Centre, explaining the issue and signposting support so the learner can resubmit.
- The learner receives further guidance on correct referencing and a verbal warning, which is recorded.
- The Head Centre sends a letter explaining why the work was referred, reinforcing that plagiarism is unacceptable, reminding the learner of good referencing practice, offering support and directing them to this policy.

6.4 First case: serious or intentional

The Head of Centre may bypass the steps in 6.3 and may:

- Refer or void the assessment and issue a formal written warning;
- Move straight to the second-case process in 6.5; or
- Where the awarding organisation's rules require it, follow its decision on the outcome.

6.5 Second case

If a second case of plagiarism or malpractice (of any kind, not necessarily the same type) involves the same learner:

- The Head of Centre will tell the learner in writing that all previous work will be called back for detailed scrutiny.
- Scrutiny will be carried out by a panel of: Head of Centre (or their nominated deputy), the assessor involved in the original assessment, and an independent assessor.
- Any previous work found to be plagiarised or otherwise invalid will be referred or its result withdrawn.

6.6 Third case

A third case will result in the learner being withdrawn from the course. Refunds, and any fees still owed to WSL, will be handled in line with the learner's agreement or contract and applicable law. Where the learner is funded, WSL will notify the funder before withdrawal and follow funder requirements.

7. Notifying awarding organisations and funders

- WSL will report suspected or confirmed malpractice to the relevant awarding organisation [e.g. AQA, OCR, Edexcel etc.] in line with that organisation's requirements and timescales. Many require all suspected malpractice to be reported, not only confirmed cases, so staff must check before closing a case.
- Funders will be informed where funding rules require it.
- Awarding organisation decisions on a case take precedence over this policy.

8. Malpractice by staff

Malpractice by WSL staff, tutors, assessors or IQAs includes, but is not limited to: helping learners to cheat; allowing or ignoring plagiarism; falsifying assessment decisions, records or signatures; breaching assessment security; and failing to report suspected malpractice.

- Concerns must be reported to [named role, e.g. Centre Manager / Director] (or, where the concern is about that person, to Head of Centre).
- Cases will be investigated promptly and fairly, handled under WSL's disciplinary procedure, and reported to the awarding organisation as required.
- WSL may suspend a staff member from assessing or quality assurance duties during an investigation.

9. Appeals

A learner (or member of staff) who disagrees with a decision under this policy may appeal in writing to Head of Centre within [5] working days of receiving the decision, explaining the grounds. The appeal will be considered by someone not involved in the original decision, and the outcome given in writing within [5] working days. Details are in the WSL [Complaints and Appeals Procedure] and, where relevant, the awarding organisation's appeals process.

10. Records, confidentiality and data protection

- WSL keeps a record of every case, including the evidence, the decision, warnings and letters issued, and any notifications to awarding organisations or funders, for [x years / as required by the awarding organisation].
- Cases are handled confidentially and shared only with those who need to know. Personal data is processed in line with WSL's Data Protection Policy and UK data protection law.