Malpractice and Maladministration

Policy & Procedure 2025/26

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1. Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out how the Southport Education Group addresses any issues regarding malpractice and maladministration including any issues regarding the authenticity of work submitted by a student for assessment. This policy applies to all staff and students at Southport Education Group (Southport College, KGV Sixth Form College and Compete Apprenticeships).

1.2 The Southport Education Group has an obligation to its students, partner universities, employers and awarding bodies to ensure that the qualifications its students receive are a fair and accurate representation of their work, and of the knowledge and skills attained. If a student 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 the Southport Education Group will undertake all appropriate measures to ensure that student work is in fact their own, and that plagiarism, cheating or other forms of malpractice have not taken place.

1.3 The Southport Education Group will also ensure that appropriate action is undertaken where malpractice or maladministration has taken place.

1.4 This policy will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary in response to Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance, stakeholder feedback, funding and awarding bodies requirements, changes in legislation, or trends identified from previous instances of assessment malpractice or maladministration.

2. Purpose and Aims of the Policy

2.1 The purpose of the policy is to:
- protect the integrity of the Southport Education Group and its qualifications;
- provide guidance and support to staff and learners on malpractice and maladministration.

2.2 The aims of the policy are to:
- identify and minimise the risk of malpractice by learners;
- identify and minimise the risk of malpractice and maladministration by staff;
- respond to any incident of alleged malpractice or maladministration promptly and objectively;
- standardise and record any investigation of malpractice or maladministration to ensure openness and fairness;
- prevent such issues from reoccurring through taking actions where malpractice or maladministration has occurred.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all students irrespective of their method of application or enrolment or their type of study including those on further education, higher education, school links and apprenticeship programmes, studying either full-time or part-time.

4. Definition

4.1 The Joint Council for Qualifications defines 'Malpractice', which includes maladministration and non-compliance, as "*any act, default or practice which is a breach of the Regulations or which:*

- *compromises, attempts to compromise or may compromise the process of assessment, the integrity of any qualification or the validity of a result or certificate;*

  and/or

- *damages the authority, reputation or credibility of any awarding body or centre or any officer, employee or agent of any awarding body or centre."*

5. Preventing Malpractice by Learners

5.1 The Southport Education Group aims to prevent malpractice by learners through:

- seeking to avoid potential malpractice by using the induction period to inform learners of the Southport Education Group's policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice;

- ensuring staff who carry out assessment show learners the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources prior to production of their coursework;

- asking students submitting written work of a page or more to submit via Turnitin in line with the Southport Education Group's Assessment Policy;

- asking learners to declare that their work is their own;

- asking learners to provide evidence that they have interpreted and synthesised appropriate information and acknowledged any sources used ;

- conducting an investigation in a form commensurate with the nature of the malpractice allegation. Such an investigation will be undertaken under the Southport Education Group's Positive Behaviour Policy. It will proceed through the following stages:

    o make the individual fully aware at the earliest opportunity of the nature of the alleged malpractice and of the possible consequences should malpractice be proven

    o give the individual the opportunity to respond to the allegations made

    o inform the individual of the avenues for appealing against any judgment made documenting all stages of any investigation.

5.2 Where malpractice is proven, the Southport Education Group will apply penalties / sanctions appropriate to the nature of the malpractice or maladministration under review and the relevant awarding body will be informed in line with the JCQ's Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments Policies and Procedures. Definitions of Malpractice by Learners

6.   Definitions of Malpractice By Learners

6.1 This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by the Southport Education Group at its discretion:

- cheating in an exam *(see section 6);*

- plagiarism of any nature *(see section 7);*

- collusion by working collaboratively with other learners to produce work that is submitted as individual learner work;

- copying (including the use of ICT to aid copying);

- deliberate destruction of another's work;

- fabrication of results or evidence;

- false declaration of authenticity in relation to the contents of a portfolio or coursework;

- impersonation by pretending to be someone else in order to produce the work for another or arranging for another to take one's place in an assessment/examination/test.

7. Cheating

7.1 Cheating is an attempt to deceive assessors or examiners. It includes but is not restricted to, situations when the student is in an examination situation and:

- Communicates or attempts to communicate with a fellow candidate or individual who is not the invigilator or a member of staff
- Copies or attempts to copy from a fellow candidate
- Attempts to introduce or consult during an examination any unauthorised printed or written material, or electronic, calculation or information storage devices, including mobile phones.
- Impersonates another or allows him or herself to be impersonated.

7.2 Cheating is considered to be gross misconduct by the Southport Education Group and will be treated as such (see section 10 or Positive Behaviour Policy). The penalties that could be imposed include down grading the result and specific disciplinary measures such as suspension or permanent exclusion from Southport Education Group. In addition Curriculum Meetings may be called to address academic concerns. The relevant awarding body will be informed in line with the JCQ's Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments Policies and Procedures.

8. Plagiarism

8.1   Definition

8.1.1   Plagiarism is the theft or use of someone else's work without proper acknowledgement, presenting the material as if it were one's own. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and consequences are severe. Where there is doubt over the authenticity of work, an opportunity will be given to demonstrate that it is genuinely that of the learner claiming credit.

8.2   Guidelines on Plagiarism – for students

8.2.1   Unacknowledged direct copying from the work of another person, or the close paraphrasing of somebody else's work, is plagiarism. This applies to copying both from other students' work, the work of staff and from published sources such as books, reports or journal articles. Plagiarised material may originate from any source. It is as serious to use material from the World Wide Web, electronic encyclopaedia or literature archive as it is to use material from a printed source if it is not properly acknowledged.

8.2.2   Use of quotations or data from the work of others is entirely acceptable, and is often very valuable provided that the source of the quotation or data is given. Failure to provide a source or put quotation marks around material taken from elsewhere gives the appearance that the comments are a learner's own work. When quoting word-for-word from the work of another person quotation marks or indenting (setting the quotation in from the margin) must be used and the source of the quoted material must be acknowledged.

8.2.3   Paraphrasing, when the original statement is still identifiable and has no acknowledgement, is plagiarism. Taking a piece of text, from whatever source, and substituting words or phrases with other words or phrases is plagiarism. Any paraphrase of another person's work must have an acknowledgement to the source. It is not acceptable to put together unacknowledged passages from the same or from different sources linking these together with a few words or sentences of your own and changing a few words from the original text: this is regarded as over-dependence on other sources, which is a form of plagiarism.

8.2.4   Direct quotations from an earlier piece of the student's own work, if unattributed, suggests that the work is original, when in fact it is not. The direct copying of one's own writings qualifies as plagiarism if the fact that the work has been or is to be presented elsewhere is not acknowledged.

8.2.5   Source of quotations used should be listed in full either as a footnote or in a bibliography at the end of the piece of work and in a style required by the student's curriculum area.

8.2.6   Coursework (including assignments, essays, skills assessments and management reports) must be the student's own work unless in the case of group projects a joint effort is expected and is indicated as such. Students must acknowledge assistance given from fellow students, staff and work-based mentors to avoid suspicion of plagiarism.

8.2.7   Major plagiarism is a serious offence and will result in the Southport Education Group disciplinary process being invoked. In deciding upon the penalty, the Southport Education Group will take into account factors such as the stage of the study, the extent and proportion of the work that has been plagiarised and the apparent intent of the student. The penalties that will be imposed include zero marks for the work (with or without allowing resubmission), the down grading of a result, reporting to the awarding body, to disciplinary measures such as suspension or permanent exclusion from the Southport Education Group. In addition Curriculum Meetings may be called to address academic concerns.

8.2.8   It is important to distinguish between minor plagiarism *(see 8.3)* and those cases in which the plagiarism is major *(8.4)*. Staff assessing students' work will use their own professional judgement to decide when an instance of plagiarism is significant, i.e. when action needs to be taken over the case. The unattributed use of several words or a single sentence would not normally require significant action (other than appropriate tutorial advice). The Southport Education Group may use appropriate software, e.g. 'Turnitin', to check a student's work.

8.3   Minor Plagiarism

8.3.1   Plagiarism that is minor includes the unattributed use of a few sentences, or a short paragraph.

8.3.2   Cases of minor plagiarism will normally be handled within the curriculum area and should be treated in a way which first of all provides clear guidance to students over what they have done; students should receive instructions from their tutor (or other members of academic staff) about plagiarism: that it amounts to cheating; and is regarded by the Southport

Education Group as very serious. The tutor should explain to the learner the necessity of properly acknowledging and referencing the work of others and should provide appropriate examples.

8.3.3   Incidents of minor plagiarism must be noted on the student's file and in the case of full-time students or apprentices the Progress Tutor should be informed.

8.4   Major Plagiarism

8.4.1   All cases not covered by the definition above are deemed to be major, that is:
- Extensive copying or plagiarism committed by students;
- Plagiarism which is the students' second (or subsequent) offence of minor plagiarism;
- Cases of such seriousness or such blatancy committed by students that to deal with them within the curriculum area would be inappropriate;
- Any case, regardless of extent, where it is inappropriate to deal with it within a curriculum area.

8.4.2   Major Plagiarism is considered to be gross misconduct by the Southport Education Group and will be treated as such (see section 10 or Positive Behaviour Policy). The penalties that will be imposed range from awarding a zero mark for the work (with or without allowing resubmission), down grading the result, reporting to the awarding body, disciplinary measures such as suspension or permanent exclusion from Southport Education Group. In addition Curriculum Meetings may be called to address academic concerns.

8.4.3   It is the tutor's responsibility to identify and report Cheating and Major Plagiarism to both the Curriculum Director and the Deputy Principal. Any uncertainties should also be recorded. A written report must be submitted which clearly states the outline of the assignment, how it was presented to the students, and the areas where the students was considered to have cheated or that were considered to be plagiarised. Procedures for Gross Misconduct will then be followed.

8.5   Artificial Intelligence (AI)

8.5.1   AI use refers to the use of AI tools to obtain information and content which might be used in work produced for assessments which lead towards qualifications. The misuse of AI tools in relation to qualification assessments at any time constitutes malpractice. Students must submit work for assessments which is their own. This means both ensuring that the final product is in their own words, and isn't copied or paraphrased from another source such as an AI tool, and that the content reflects their own independent work. AI tools must only be used when the conditions of the assessment permit the use of the internet and where the student is able to demonstrate that the final submission is the product of their own independent work and independent thinking.

8.5.2   Examples of AI misuse include, but are not limited to, the following:

• 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

8.5.3 It is essential that sources which are used are referenced when producing work for an assessment. Appropriate referencing is a means of demonstrating academic integrity and is key to maintaining the integrity of assessments. If a student uses an AI tool which provides details of the sources it has used in generating content, these sources must be verified by the student and referenced in their work in the normal way. Where an AI tool does not provide such details, students should ensure that they independently verify the AI-generated content – and then reference the sources they have used. In addition, the AI used must also be acknowledged and students must show clearly how they have used it.

8.5.4 Where AI tools have been used as a source of information, a student's acknowledgement must show the name of the AI source used and should show the date the content was generated. For example: ChatGPT 3.5 (https://openai.com/ blog/chatgpt/), 25/01/2024. The student must, retain a copy of the question(s) and computer-generated content for reference and authentication purposes, in a non-editable format (such as a screenshot) and provide a brief explanation of how it has been used. This must be submitted with the work the student submits for assessment, so the teacher/assessor is able to review the work, the AI-generated content and how it has been used.

8.5.5 If the tutor suspects that AI has been used and the content is not submitted then the tutor should take the necessary steps to assure themselves that the work is the student's own. Guidance on how this could be done can be found in the JCQ Plagiarism in Assessment Guidance Document ([Plagiarism in Assessments - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)).

8.5.6 If the tutor concludes AI has been used improperly then this would be classed as plagiarism and the procedure in 8.4 should be followed.

9. Actions arising from malpractice or maladministration – for Learners

9.1 Escalation Process for Academic Misconduct

9.1.1 All instances of suspected academic misconduct, including but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, collusion, and inappropriate use of AI, will be investigated in accordance with the Southport Education Group Positive Behaviour Policy.

9.1.2 The formal escalation process for academic misconduct will follow the Academic Performance disciplinary pathway outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy. This includes:

- **Stage 1 – Verbal Warning**

  Issued by the Progress Tutor or Course Leader. The learner will be informed of the concern, expectations will be clarified, and this will be recorded in the learner's Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

- **Stage 2 – Written Warning**

  If academic concerns persist, the Curriculum Manager will meet with the learner, issue a formal written warning, and record it in the ILP.

- **Stage 3 – Final Written Warning**

  Continued academic misconduct will result in a final written warning issued by the Director, with the meeting and outcome recorded in the ILP.

- **Suspension or Exclusion:** For gross or repeated misconduct, a Suspension Hearing will be conducted by a senior member of staff (Deputy Principal, Director, or designated leader). This may lead to exclusion. All decisions are documented and communicated in accordance with college procedures.

9.1.3 In cases of gross academic misconduct, including major plagiarism, impersonation, or deliberate use of AI to deceive, the escalation process may bypass the sequential warning stages and proceed directly to suspension or exclusion.

9.1.4 Any findings will be reported to awarding bodies as required, and sanctions applied in accordance with the JCQ guidance and Southport Education Group disciplinary procedures.

10. Malpractice and Maladministration by Southport Education Group Staff

10.1 Examples of staff malpractice and maladministration

9.1.1   This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice and maladministration may be considered by the Southport Education Group at its discretion:

- improper assistance to candidates prior to or during examination or assessment
- inventing or changing marks for internally assessed work (coursework or portfolio evidence) where there is insufficient evidence of the candidates' achievement to justify the marks given or assessment decisions made
- failure to keep candidate coursework/portfolios of evidence secure
- fraudulent claims for certificates
- inappropriate retention of certificates
- assisting learners in the production of work for assessment, where the support has the potential to influence the outcomes of assessment, for example where the assistance involves Southport Education Group staff producing work for the learner
- producing falsified witness statements, for example for evidence the learner has not generated
- allowing evidence, which is known by the staff member not to be the learner's own, to be included in a learner's assignment/task/portfolio/coursework
- facilitating and allowing impersonation
- misusing the conditions for special learner requirements, for example where learners are permitted support this is permissible up to the point where the support has the potential to influence the outcome of the assessment
- falsifying records/certificates, for example by alteration, substitution, or by fraud
- fraudulent application or administration of recognition of prior learning
- fraudulent certificate claims, that is claiming for a certificate prior to the learner completing all the requirements of assessment.

11. Actions arising from malpractice or maladministration – for Staff

11.1 Any suspected instances of staff malpractice or maladministration should be reported immediately to the Deputy Principal and the relevant Curriculum Director.

11.2 Once reported any suspected malpractice or maladministration will be reviewed in line with Southport Education Group procedures and awarding body guidelines. This may result in referrals regarding to suspected malpractice prior to any investigation where this is required by the awarding body.

11.3 All instances of alleged staff malpractice or maladministration will be handled in line with the Southport Education Group's Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. These procedures ensure that allegations are investigated fairly, promptly and objectively, while maintaining the rights of the employee and the integrity of the College.

11.3.1 The process begins with an internal investigation by a designated management representative. Where appropriate, the employee will be informed in writing of the nature of the concerns and will be given the opportunity to respond before any disciplinary decision is made.

11.3.2 Where the investigation concludes that there is a case to answer, the following escalation stages will apply:

- **Stage 1 – Verbal Warning**
  Issued for a first instance of minor misconduct. This will be recorded but will normally expire after six months, subject to satisfactory conduct.
- **Stage 2 – First Written Warning**
  Issued where the matter is more serious or there has been no improvement following a verbal warning. This warning remains active for twelve months.
- **Stage 3 – Final Written Warning**
  Issued for more serious misconduct, repeated misconduct, or failure to improve after a first written warning. This remains on record for eighteen months, or longer in exceptional circumstances.
- **Stage 4 – Dismissal**
  Dismissal (with or without notice) may occur where there has been gross misconduct, or where previous warnings have not resulted in required improvements.

11.3.3 Gross misconduct, including serious malpractice such as falsification of records, aiding student cheating, or breaches of examination security, may result in summary dismissal without notice. In such cases, an investigation and disciplinary hearing will still be conducted in line with College policy.

11.3.4 All disciplinary outcomes will be confirmed in writing, and the staff member will be informed of their right to appeal. Appeals must be submitted within ten working days of the outcome notification, as outlined in Section 10 of the Staff Disciplinary Policy.

11.3.5 Where the malpractice or maladministration relates to assessment or awarding body regulations, external agencies may also be informed as required. Actions arising from the outcome will be recorded and monitored to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

12. Related policies, procedures and guidelines

11.1 The following documents should be read in conjunction with this policy and are available via the Southport Education Group websites (www.southport.ac.uk or www.kgv.ac.uk):

- *Positive Behaviour Policy*
- *Fitness to Study and Practise Policy and Procedure*
- *Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure*