



PART OF **nocn** GROUP



NOCN Use of Artificial Intelligence Policy and Procedure

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Contents

1. Scope	1
2. Purpose.....	1
3. What is Artificial Intelligence? (AI)	1
4. Principles on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	2
5. Permitted use of Artificial Intelligence.....	4
6. Misuse of Artificial Intelligence	5
I. Indicative Examples of Centre/Training Provider AI Misuse	5
II. Examples of Learner/Apprentice AI Misuse.....	5
7. Prevention of AI Misuse	6
8. Identification of Suspected AI Misuse	8
9. Reporting and Investigation of AI Misuse	9
10. NOCN Use of AI.....	9
11. Additional Support.....	9

1. Scope

1.01 This policy and procedure has been produced to outline NOCN's stance regarding the appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This includes how centres and training providers must embed ways of working to ensure appropriate use of AI and to identify misuse where this does occur by Centre or Training Provider staff members or learners/apprentices.

1.01 This policy and procedure applies to NOCN:

- a) Regulated qualifications, units, examinations and assessments.
- b) Non-regulated products including Assured Courses.
- c) End Point Assessments.

1.02 The intended audience for this guidance document is:

- a) NOCN Directors and Board of Trustees.
- b) NOCN core, sub-contracted and associate staff, including External Quality Assurers (EQAs) and End Point Assessors.
- c) All staff of NOCN Delivery Partners associated with NOCN provision.
- d) All staff in NOCN approved/partner centres and training providers.
- e) Learners registered on NOCN products.
- f) Apprentices completing End Point Assessments.
- g) Qualification¹, assessment and industry Regulators.

1.03 If a member of public wishes to raise to NOCN concerns regarding NOCN's intellectual property appearing on generative AI websites, they should contact the NOCN Regulation and Compliance Team at groupcompliance@nocn.org.uk.

2. Purpose

2.01 The purpose of this document is to:

- a) Provide clear guidance on how AI can and should be appropriately used in relation to the delivery of NOCN products.
- b) Define AI misuse in the context of NOCN products.
- c) Outline the measures which must be taken by those involved in the delivery of NOCN products in relation to the prevention of AI misuse.
- d) Outline how AI misuse can be identified.
- e) Confirm the action which must be taken if AI misuse is identified or suspected.
- f) Minimise risks to the integrity of NOCN products and to protect learner/apprentice interests.
- g) Ensure that NOCN meets the requirements of the Qualification and Industry Regulators.

3. What is Artificial Intelligence? (AI)

3.01 Artificial Intelligence, commonly referred to as AI, is a field of computer science that focuses on creating systems capable of performing tasks that would typically require human intelligence. These tasks may include, but are not limited to understanding natural language, recognising patterns, solving problems and making decisions.

¹ Qualification Regulators: Ofqual in England; Qualification Wales; CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland or successor bodies.

- 3.02 AI is built on algorithms and data. Algorithms are sets of rules or instructions given to computers to help them learn from data. Over time, as the system processes more data, it learns and improves its performance on tasks. This process is known as machine learning, which is a subset of AI.
- 3.03 AI tools create content and responses based on information and requests input by a user. Although NOCN does not endorse or promote the use of a particular AI system over another, commonly used free-to-use AI tools include:
- a) ChatGPT
 - b) Google Bard
 - c) Claude
- 3.04 Large Language Models (LLMs) are a type of artificial intelligence technology focused on understanding and generating human language. These models are designed to process, analyse, and often generate text based on the training they have received. ChatGPT is an example of a Large Language Model.
- 3.05 If used safely and appropriately, AI can support the delivery of NOCN products, however, AI is a fast-growing and evolving area and therefore it is important that all individuals are aware of the potential risks AI poses, how to mitigate these and how to ensure AI is not used inappropriately.

4. Principles on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- 4.01 NOCN view AI as a useful and supportive resource that can serve many internal functions across an organisation, as well as assisting teaching and learning by Centres, Training Providers and learners/apprentices. It is therefore not NOCN's stance to prohibit its customers from accessing and using AI, but rather to provide a set of clear guidance and principles to guide AI use and implement measures to maintain the integrity of NOCN products and to safeguard the interests of both our customers and learners/apprentices.
- 4.02 *Ensure Understanding of the Capabilities and Limitations of AI Tools* - NOCN centres and training providers must ensure that they familiarise themselves with this policy and procedure and the risks posed by AI in general to ensure that they embed appropriate controls and mitigations into their own policies, procedures, ways of working and quality and management systems. By understanding AI tools and their capabilities and limitations, centres and training providers can ensure that their approach to appropriate use of AI remains fit for purpose and appropriate over time.
- 4.03 *Use AI to Support, Not Generate Output* - Any user of AI has the responsibility to ensure that any AI generated content is used in an appropriate manner and be aware that AI generated content may not always be accurate or up-to-date. For this reason, any content generated by AI must be reviewed and checked for accuracy and currency by an individual who holds the appropriate expertise before being embedded into NOCN product delivery.
- 4.04 *Ensure Compliance with NOCN Assessment and Policy Requirements at all times* – All users of NOCN products, including centres, training providers, learners and apprentices have the responsibility to ensure that they are aware of, understand and comply with both the requirements of the product they are accessing, as well as NOCN's suite of policies and

procedures in relation to product delivery. Indicative examples of AI misuse are provided in Section 6 of this policy and procedure, however, it is important to note that this is not exhaustive, and any use of AI which may impede on the integrity of a NOCN product will be deemed as AI misuse and may be investigated by NOCN in line with the NOCN Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure.

- 4.05 *Ensure Stakeholder Understanding and Compliance* – Centres and training providers must ensure that they appropriately inform their employees and their learners and apprentices on appropriate use of AI to ensure compliance with this policy and procedure. This includes ensuring AI is specifically mentioned in both internal and external policies, procedures and notices. Centres and training providers must take all reasonable steps to prevent and identify AI misuse to remain compliant with NOCN requirements. This includes ensuring their employees and learners/apprentices are fully aware of how they can use AI, what constitutes as AI misuse and the potential penalties where misuse of AI occurs.
- 4.06 *Be Cautious and Review your Approach* – Centres and Training Providers must ensure that they take a precautionary approach to the use of AI if they decide to embed compliant use of AI use into their delivery of NOCN products. AI use must be flagged as a risk on applicable risk registers and NOCN encourages discussions of AI use and risks as part of management, quality and standardisation meetings. Centres must ensure they continuously review their approach to AI use to ensure they keep on top of the advancements with the technology and mitigate any new or emerging risks or challenges within the sector.
- 4.07 *Maintain Privacy, Confidentiality and Security at all times* – Centres and training providers must ensure that their employees, as well as their learners and apprentices, avoid inputting sensitive, personal or confidential information into AI tools, as data entered may be stored by the software of third parties and may breach the customer's own data protection policies and Data Protection legislation. This includes ensuring that no confidential assessment material, such as questions, scenarios or tasks which form part of a NOCN examination or assessment, is shared with any form of AI tool, including generative AI and AI transcription software.
- 4.08 *Ensure Ethical Use of AI* – Centres and training providers must be mindful of potential biases which AI generated content may produce due to the fact that AI models are trained on vast data sets which may contain inherent biases. For example, avoid using AI to generate content which could perpetuate stereotypes or produce harmful, inappropriate or offensive material. Centres and training providers should consider NOCN's guidance in relation to the development of accessible assessments, available on the NOCN website.
- 4.09 *Ensure AI use is Acknowledged and Referenced* – Centres and training providers must ensure that any use of AI within their organisation is clearly identified and that this is disclosed internally and externally. Learners and apprentices must ensure any use of AI is clearly referenced within their work, where it is permitted in the use of the product they are studying. Failure to reference AI in submitted learner or apprentice work must be treated as malpractice by the Centre or Training Provider and NOCN must be notified in line with the NOCN Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure.
- 4.10 *Seek Feedback and Advice* – We encourage NOCN centres and training providers to share your experiences of the use of AI with NOCN to ensure ongoing communications between NOCN and its customers on current benefits, limitations and risks in the use of AI to ensure a collaborative approach to mitigating and limiting risks. Centres and training providers must ensure they fully co-operate with NOCN where AI misuse is suspected.

5. Permitted use of Artificial Intelligence

- 5.01 The primary consideration when determining whether AI use is appropriate is whether the use would contravene compliance with NOCN or assessment requirements.
- 5.02 AI tools are very useful sources of information, and can be used to collate information from many sources across the internet far quicker than a human searching for individual pages/articles using a search engine. Using AI tools in this way does not threaten compliance with NOCN requirements as it is being used for the purpose of information gathering to support product delivery, but does not impact on assessment standards. In this scenario however, the information generated by AI must still be checked for accuracy and currency before being embedded into delivery plans.
- 5.03 Other examples of permitted AI use are:
- a) Summarising large pieces of writing, such as specifications and guidance, to provide a starting point for a response to a written assessment.
 - b) Providing suggestions on topics/subjects to focus on in a given written task, as long as these have been checked for appropriateness and accuracy.
 - c) Summarising research topics to inform an assignment, as long as this is referenced and checked for accuracy.
 - d) Comparing pieces of writing/data and highlighting similarities/differences to inform one's own analysis in a written task.
 - e) Bypassing sponsored/SEO-influenced links to provide a wider range of potential sources of reference and research.
 - f) Creating marketing and communications content, as long as this is checked for appropriateness.
 - g) Online support chatbots and resolutions – as long as this remains fit for purpose and produces accurate information.
 - h) Production of guidance documents, policies and assessment tasks, as long as these are subsequently reviewed, amended and tailored by an individual to ensure accuracy, validity and appropriateness.
- 5.04 A key consideration for Tutors, Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers in reviewing learner and apprentice use of AI to support completion of assessments (where permitted by the individual product/assessment) is to ensure that work produced and submitted is authentic. Any sources, such as those provided through AI, must be referenced as such to ensure that the source is not attributed to the learner or apprentice themselves.
- 5.05 Where information is gathered from AI to form part of an assessment, where reading or research is permitted, the AI generated evidence must be cognitively processed, or directly quoted and referenced, to ensure that the work remains authentic to the learner and not plagiarised.
- 5.06 Centres and training providers must have a query resolution process in place for both their employees and learners and apprentices where an individual is unsure whether an intended AI use is permitted. If a Centre or Training Provider is unsure, they should contact the NOCN Regulation and Compliance Team for advice at groupcompliance@nocn.org.uk.

6. Misuse of Artificial Intelligence

- 6.01 It is important to note that the examples provided within this policy and procedure are not exhaustive. NOCN will consider any use of AI which contravenes any of its policies, procedures, guidance and principles outlined in Section 4 as misuse. It is therefore important that centres and training providers fully understand the risks of AI use and have embedded systems and ways of working to prevent misuse.
- 6.02 AI tools can be mis-used in a number of ways to breach NOCN policy and assessment requirements such as breaching the confidentiality of assessment materials, learner or apprentice plagiarism and invalid assessment design and delivery. Each of these acts will be investigated by NOCN as an act of malpractice in line with the NOCN Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure.

I. Indicative Examples of Centre/Training Provider AI Misuse

- 6.03 To aid understanding of what NOCN constitutes as AI misuse regarding the delivery of NOCN qualifications, units, courses and their associated assessments, NOCN has produced examples of acts which will constitute as AI misuse, which includes, but is not limited to:
- a) Failure to adhere to the NOCN Examination and Invigilation Policy and Procedure, including ensuring the confidentiality and security of assessment materials and ensuring examinations and assessments are conducted under the required conditions, such as ensuring learners or apprentices are unaided in completing their assessments.
 - b) The improper facilitation or recommendation of AI by learners or apprentices, such as allowing learners to use AI during an external assessment which is meant to be sat under controlled conditions.
 - c) The dissemination or inputting of any item, question or task which forms part of a NOCN assessment or examination into an AI service, including generative AI and transcription services.
 - d) Provision of resources or materials to learners which has been produced by AI, but has not been checked by an individual for appropriateness, accuracy and validity.
 - e) Deception through the manufacturing of learner evidence, records of observations, witness testimonies or any other assessment records through AI.
 - f) Failure to appropriately respond to and investigate suspected cases of malpractice or maladministration, including the failure to notify NOCN where suspicions of AI misuse are identified.
 - g) Failure to respond to the risks posed by AI into effective management and quality systems.
 - h) Failure to ensure learners and apprentices are appropriately informed regarding AI misuse and its implications.

II. Examples of Learner/Apprentice AI Misuse

- 6.04 Examples of malpractice which may be committed by a learner/apprentice registered against a NOCN product include, but are not limited to:
- a) Use of AI to support completion of an assessment where assessments must be completed in controlled conditions and unaided.
 - b) Copying from AI sources either electronically or in person and submitting it as if it their own (also known as plagiarism).

- c) Dissemination/inputting of any secure or confidential information into AI, including contents from confidential assessment material, such as a Functional Skills examination or End Point Assessment knowledge test. This includes the use of 'homework helper' AI websites.
- d) Using a transcription service during a confidential assessment, such as those which form part of an End Point Assessment.

6.05 Although the use of AI to find and collate information or create sources is permitted, any content must be considered an external source. This is no different to the use of any other sources in written work, such as articles or publications written by experts – a lack of appropriate referencing of AI-generated content is therefore considered to be plagiarism in the form of AI misuse. The NOCN Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure defines plagiarism as:

'Failure to acknowledge sources properly... and submitting (work) as if it their own (also known as plagiarism). This also includes misuse of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, for example, a failure to acknowledge AI-generated content as a source, or submitting AI-generated content as if it were their own.'

6.06 A particular risk of AI misuse by learners or apprentices is the use of 'homework helper' AI websites, where, if access is not controlled appropriately by centres or training providers, could lead to the dissemination of secure and confidential assessment or examination material by learners or apprentices. Where this occurs, this will be considered as malpractice by NOCN and will be investigated to identify the source of the breach. Appropriate Sanctions will be applied in line with the NOCN Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure where such activity is identified. Examples of 'homework helper' websites include, but are not limited to:

- a) Gauthmath, (<https://www.gauthmath.com/>),
- b) QuestionAI (<https://www.questionai.com/>) ,
- c) Brainly (<https://brainly.com/>)

7. Prevention of AI Misuse

7.01 Centres and training providers must ensure that they take all reasonable steps to prevent and mitigate the risk of AI misuse by their employees and by their learners and apprentices.

7.02 Centres and training providers must:

- a) Ensure that all of their employees and apprentices and learners are fully conversant with the relevant NOCN policies, procedures and assessment requirements in relation to their role or NOCN product being accessed, including those in relation to AI.
- b) Ensure that the principles outlined in Section 4 of this policy and procedure are followed at all times to ensure awareness, consideration and the risks of AI are fully embedded into the Centre's management and quality systems.
- c) Understand the definition of AI misuse and how this is classified within the NOCN Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure, including the implications where AI misuse is identified by NOCN.
- d) Work in a way which allows a collaborative approach between them and NOCN to respond to emerging risks in relation to AI and future advancements.

7.03 Centres and training providers should ensure they are aware of and resilient to any emerging risks in relation to AI misuse and engage with NOCN in a proactive manner to safeguard the interests of both NOCN products and registered learners/apprentices. In addition to compliance with NOCN requirements, NOCN expects the continuous improvement of Centre/Training Provider internal processes and the embedding of best practice to prevent and detect AI misuse.

7.04 Examples of best practice in relation to ensuring the confidentiality of assessment material includes, but is not limited to:

- a) Issuing key and regular reminders to delivery staff and Invigilators regarding their responsibilities in relation to maintaining the confidentiality of examination material.
- b) Issuing Written and verbal warnings issued to learners regarding acts of malpractice before their examination and outlining possible penalties.
- c) Conducting discussions regarding malpractice, including risks and controls to prevent such incidents, as part of Centre management and standardisation meetings.
- d) Conducting regular reviews and strengthening of internal processes and policies in relation to examination administration to address any potential weaknesses.
- e) Ensuring close monitoring of the access to secure examination material and limiting this to as few trusted members of staff as possible.
- f) Conducting IQA observations of live examination sessions (where permitted) to monitor Invigilator performance and competency, both announced and unannounced.
- g) Ensuring full audit trails of examination administration, with declarations responsibilities have been adhered to with individuals involved.
- h) Addressing any risks where examinations are taking place off-site, including ensuring secure transportation and that appropriate risk-assessments and examination room checklists have been completed and are auditable.

7.05 Examples of best practice in relation to ensuring the validity of learner or apprentice produced work includes, but is not limited to conducting:

- a) Ensuring that AI misuse is referenced in their own relevant policies and guidance, including those which are learner and apprentice facing. NOCN recommends that the misuse of AI is referenced and defined as an act of malpractice.
- b) Ensuring learners and apprentices understanding of AI misuse, evidenced through the provision of an explanation of malpractice, including the definitions of AI misuse and plagiarism, both as part of their induction and prior to the submission of any work.
- c) Implementation of effective engagement with learners/apprentices, including monitoring of any work produced, throughout their course of learning – this allows centres and training providers to build a profile of a learner/apprentice's writing and communication style prior to assessment, enabling easier identification of a different style of writing in an assessment task, which is a key indicator of AI misuse.
- d) Where the assessment method is not dictated by NOCN, assess learners through multiple means, rather than one written assignment/project, which may pose a higher risk of plagiarism and AI misuse. For example, to ensure the authenticity of any written assessments, a Centre could conduct a professional discussion or interview with a learner, underpinned by, or referencing their written submission. Centres could also introduce the requirement to submit draft submissions of written work to identify any AI misuse early and to ensure familiarity with the learner's written style before final assessment submission.

- e) Ensure appropriate tracking of learner progress throughout their course of learning by informally assessing their knowledge in the form of quizzes or short tests. Tracking knowledge allows centres to identify plagiarism more effectively, as it can be mapped to written assessments to flag for discrepancies.
- f) Collect signed accompanying authenticity statements from learners/apprentices where written work is produced. These statements should make reference to the Centre/Training Provider's malpractice policy/guidance, including AI misuse, and that this states that AI misuse will be considered plagiarism by NOCN.

8. Identification of Suspected AI Misuse

8.01 In its current state, AI-generated content tends to contain a number of certain characteristics which can allow centres and training providers to identify where AI may have been utilised. It is important for centres and training providers to be aware of these indicators to ensure AI misuse can be identified and investigated in a timely manner.

8.02 Examples of characteristics which AI-generated content may include:

- a) Use of American spelling and currency.
- b) Presence of language and vocabulary above the level in which the learner or apprentice is assessed, or which does not match the learner's usual written language style.
- c) Repeated use of the same adverbs and adjectives.
- d) A lack of quotations or use of external sources and references.
- e) Linear 'template' structure with a clear distinction between an introduction, content and summary.

8.03 As AI-generated content is based on statistical likelihoods of language use, its content usually contains the most common combination of words. Centres and training providers are encouraged to use software such as GPTZero (<https://gptzero.me/>) which can analyse written work and identify patterns, which may be a likely indicator of AI use. Centres and training providers may also use other anti-plagiarism tools such as Turnitin.

8.04 Regular conversations with staff, learners and apprentices can also allow AI misuse to be identified, especially where AI has not been misused deliberately. Best practice working groups are encouraged to share best practices and to discuss risks.

8.05 Centres and training providers are actively encouraged, and in some cases required to as part of product approval and delivery, conduct observations on training, assessment and examination activities as part of their own internal quality assurance strategies and processes to ensure that their processes for the prevention of AI misuse are fit for purpose, are understood and are being followed. Centres and training providers should keep records of any activities completed to demonstrate to NOCN the resilience and robustness of their internal management and quality systems.

8.06 Centres and training providers must have a dedicated team or contact who are responsible for dealing with incidents of suspected malpractice, including AI misuse. Any suspicions of AI

misuse must follow the Centre or Training Provider's own internal process, which must include notification to NOCN.

9. Reporting and Investigation of AI Misuse

- 9.01 Centres encountering AI misuse in internally marked assessments should complete and submit the Notification of Suspected or Proven Malpractice Form, available on the NOCN website, in line with the NOCN Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure.
- 9.02 Once reported, NOCN will follow its policy in relation to malpractice and will either investigate or request internal enquiries to be completed. Where it is identified that AI has been used by a learner/apprentice as part of an assessment submission where this is not permitted, NOCN may void the result of the assessment.
- 9.03 Where NOCN suspects or identifies that there has been a breach of NOCN or assessment requirements, including the breach of confidentiality of assessment materials or the facilitation of AI misuse by apprentices or learners, NOCN will take appropriate action. For further guidance on the action taken by NOCN following investigations into malpractice, please refer to the NOCN Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure.

10. NOCN Use of AI

- 10.01 NOCN will follow its own internal policies and procedures to ensure its own employees and workers use AI in an appropriate manner. As standard ways of working, NOCN currently uses AI in a variety of ways, such as to provide its record and review invigilation service.
- 10.02 Any misuse of AI by NOCN employees or representatives will be investigated in line with NOCN's own internal processes.

11. Additional Support

- 11.01 For any further support, guidance or queries regarding the use of AI, please contact the NOCN Regulation and Compliance Team at groupcompliance@nocn.org.uk.