Academic Misconduct in CIPFA exams – don't get caught out!

Misconduct in exams is a serious assessment offence that can have consequences for a student's future. Misconduct can take various forms and the penalties vary depending on each case. Some examples of penalties can include zero marks being awarded, suspended for a period of time or being removed from the student register and therefore not being able to complete your qualification.

CIPFA has policies that students should be aware of and these are available for students to access on the website: CIPFA's student policies, procedures and forms | CIPFA. The policies relevant to Misconduct are: Assessment Regulations, Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Assessment Offence Policy.

Any case that has been identified as alleged academic misconduct during an examination will be managed through CIPFA's Assessment Offence Policy.

During the marking and moderation processes, the Marking Team reports to CIPFA, irregularities with student scripts which result in potential assessment offences. Cases are reviewed by CIPFA's Examination Panel in accordance with CIPFA's Assessment Offence Policy. If the Examination Panel agree there is a clear breach of examination rules, a penalty will be imposed.

Students may appeal a decision and must be able to provide clear evidence as to how they believe the decision against them is incorrect. Disagreement with the decision without providing clear evidence, does not give grounds for an appeal.

We wish to shed light on an important and potentially damaging abuse of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in assessments. Samantha Taylor talks to us about **protecting qualifications and assessment from abuse from Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) use**

While AI offers exciting possibilities, it is crucial to approach its implementation and the implications of which; and give caution and consideration to ethical matters and the safeguarding of the integrity of the assessment.

We know that students and educators across the UK and Internationally have started to investigate the use of AI in the development of coursework and assessments. Incorporating AI in assessments can be transformative, but as educators, it is our responsibility to ensure the ethical use of AI to maintain fairness and preserve the integrity of assessment whilst also embracing the benefits that technology can bring.

AI can be an excellent tool to assist learning, development and creation of important works, however CIPFA do not accept AI use in any of our formal live assessments. Additionally in relation to controlled coursework elements that are submitted, unless clearly referenced, as part of research, this is also not permitted.

Referencing is how students acknowledge the source of the information they have used (referred to) in their work. It helps to make clear to the marker, how they have used the work of others to develop their own ideas and arguments.

If we suspect that a summative assessment is based solely on the generation of data from AI and it has not been referenced, but passed off as a student's own work we will investigate under our malpractice policy and process as cheating, which may result in disqualification of the submitted assessment under academic misconduct.

We also want to guide you on the drawbacks with AI:

- Bias and fairness: AI systems are trained on vast amounts of data, and if the training data is biased, it can extend unfairness in assessments. Algorithms may inadvertently favour certain demographics, perpetuating existing inequities. It is essential to ensure that AI assessment tools are continuously monitored, audited, and improved to mitigate bias and maintain fairness in grading.
- Lack of contextual understanding: AI-based assessment tools often struggle with understanding the nuances and contextual aspects of student responses for particular subject areas. They may fail to recognise creativity, critical thinking, or alternative perspectives that cannot be easily quantified. The reliance on automated systems alone can hinder a holistic evaluation of a student's capabilities and potential.
- Cheating and malpractice: AI technologies can be exploited for cheating purposes. Students may find ways to game the system, using AI to generate plagiarised content or manipulate algorithms for favourable results. Educators must remain vigilant in detecting and addressing these unethical practices to maintain the integrity and credibility of assessments.
- Ethical use of data: AI assessment tools collect and analyse vast amounts of student data, raising concerns about privacy and data protection. It is crucial to handle student data responsibly, ensuring compliance with relevant regulations and maintaining transparency with students about the purpose, scope, and security measures surrounding the use of their data.
- Overreliance on technology: While AI can enhance assessments, it is essential to strike a balance between technological advancements and human judgment. Relying solely on AI systems for writing assessments, can seriously undermine the significance of human creativity and expertise.

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