Academic Conduct and Malpractice Policy

Document Summary

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This policy outlines the commitment of The City College and The City College of Acupuncture to academic conduct and integrity, which forms the foundation of all higher education and professional clinical training. This policy aligns with guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, Office for Students Condition B4, the Quality Assurance Agency, Pearson centre regulations, and British Acupuncture Accreditation Board standards.

1. All work submitted for assessment must be your own.

1.1. The College's Principles on Academic Honesty

We believe that integrity and honesty are fundamental to learning. You are expected to respect and maintain these values at all times.

- Honesty: You must be truthful in all academic activities, including when you conduct research and report data.
- Trust: You should always give full credit for the contributions of others and never try to gain an unfair advantage.
- Respect: We respect the work of others and expect you to do the same by correctly acknowledging all sources.
- Fairness: We are committed to a fair and consistent process for all students, ensuring that all decisions are proportionate and transparent.

2. Categories of Academic Malpractice

Academic malpractice is any behaviour that undermines the integrity of your work and seeks to give you an unfair advantage. We have defined three levels of seriousness to ensure our response is fair.

2.1 Examples of Poor Academic Practice

This is an unintentional mistake, often due to a lack of understanding of academic conventions. It is an educational opportunity, not a deliberate act of cheating.

Examples of Poor Academic Practice:

- Minor errors in a referencing list or bibliography.
- Inadequate paraphrasing of a source without intent to deceive.
- Submitting work with an unclear structure or poor presentation.
- Using a source that is not academically credible (e.g., a personal blog).

2.2 Academic Malpractice

This is a deliberate attempt to deceive or gain an advantage.

- Examples of Academic Malpractice:
- Plagiarism: Using another person's words, ideas, or data as your own without proper acknowledgement. This includes copying text, images, or data from any source (books, websites, etc.).
- Self-Plagiarism (Duplication): Submitting work that is identical or substantially similar to a piece of work you have previously submitted for another assessment.
- Collusion: Working with another student on an individual assignment and submitting it as your own.
- Falsification of Data: Inventing or altering data for a report or project.

2.3 Severe Academic Malpractice

This is a serious and intentional act of cheating that significantly undermines the integrity of an assessment.

- Examples of Severe Academic Malpractice:
- Copying another student's work: Submitting work that is directly copied from a peer.
- Impersonation: Arranging for another person to take your place in an assessment.
- Misuse of AI-generated content: Submitting content generated by an AI tool (such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, etc.) as your own original work, unless the assessment has explicitly permitted this use.
- Submitting unauthorised levels of generative AI content may result in an assignment being held pending formal investigation. While students must declare generative AI tools, this requirement does not restrict or penalise approved assistive software provided through Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) or agreed as a reasonable

adjustment for specific learning differences, such as dyslexia, in full compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Contract Cheating

Under the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, providing, arranging, or advertising commercial cheating services, ghostwriting, or essay mills is a criminal offence in England. Commissioning or submitting work produced by any third party constitutes severe academic malpractice.

Students are warned that commercial essay operators routinely use extortion, harassment, and blackmail. When students attempt to cancel an order or refuse demands for additional funds, these services frequently threaten exposure, visa cancellation, or contact with College authorities.

Where a student is targeted by external harassment, threats, or blackmail, they must report the matter immediately to the Student Welfare Officer. The College treats extortion and external threats as urgent safeguarding issues. While any submitted work must be evaluated for academic authenticity under this policy, the College provides immediate welfare, pastoral, and safeguarding support to protect the student from external coercion and fraud.

3. Your Responsibility and AI Use

Your responsibility for academic integrity extends to the use of AI tools.

Permitted use includes utilising artificial intelligence for brainstorming concepts, structuring study schedules, or proofreading spelling and grammar.

Unauthorised misuse includes submitting text, computer code, or analysis generated by artificial intelligence as original work, which will be investigated as severe academic malpractice.

Authorship limitations: generative software cannot be credited as an academic author and frequently produces fabricated citations and inaccurate data.

Assessment briefs dictate permitted scope; where an assignment permits specific artificial intelligence tools, parameters will be explicitly documented within the brief.

All work submitted for assessment is subject to electronic text-matching software. While indicators of AI generation may be reviewed, the College does not rely solely on automated AI detection software to determine malpractice, ensuring every investigation is led by holistic academic review and human judgment, in line with regulators.

4. The Malpractice Process

Our process is designed to be fair, transparent, and consistent.

- Identification and evidence gathering, where an assessor, internal verifier, or examination invigilator identifies irregularities, suspicious stylistic shifts, or Turnitin anomalies.
- Evidentiary standards for third-party and essay mill allegations: where an allegation is received from an external commercial entity, essay mill, or unsolicited email, the College treats the communication with extreme caution. Staff must not respond to or engage with external blackmailers. The Lead Internal Verifier will independently inspect the authentic submission, file creation timestamps, document author metadata, and writing history. Unsubstantiated claims from third-party extortionists will not form the basis of a malpractice finding without independent academic corroboration.
- In the initial review, the Internal Verifier evaluates the verified evidence to determine whether formal proceedings are required.
- Student Notification: The Lead Assessment Administrator will contact you by email to inform you of the allegation and provide you with a copy of the evidence.
- Academic Hearing: An Academic Hearing will be arranged for all cases of Severe Academic Malpractice or if you wish to challenge the allegation. You will receive at least five working days' notice.
- Student Supporter. You may bring a fellow student or staff member to the hearing for support as a friend, but not a legally qualified representative.
- Decision & Appeal: The Academic Hearing Panel will determine the outcome based on the evidence. You will be notified of the decision within five working days and informed of your right to appeal.

5. Penalties for Malpractice

Penalties are based on the severity of the offence, your intent, and whether it is a repeated instance.

Malpractice Level	**Potential Penalties (One or more may apply)**
Poor Academic Practice	Corrective support and guidance. This includes developmental feedback, referral to academic study skills,

Malpractice Level	Potential Penalties (One or more may apply)
	and a requirement to correct and resubmit referencing errors without a grade cap.
Academic Malpractice	A formal reprimand. The student is required to resubmit the assignment, and the grade is capped at a Pass.
Severe Academic Malpractice	The Academic Hearing Panel may impose one or a combination of the following penalties, proportionate to the case: • Requirement to submit an entirely new assignment, with the unit grade capped strictly at a Pass • Award of a mark of zero for the unit, with no opportunity for resubmission • Barring from progression to the subsequent level of study and termination of course registration, with student entitlement limited strictly to an earned exit qualification where valid credits have been achieved, subject to awarding body confirmation • Temporary suspension or permanent expulsion from the College with complete termination of student registration

In accordance with Pearson regulations on dealing with malpractice and maladministration, the College formally reports all confirmed cases of severe academic malpractice on Higher National courses to Pearson. Any award of credit, interim exit qualification, or formal certification for Pearson programmes remains subject to awarding organisation confirmation following their review of the reported case. For acupuncture and Tui Na programmes, confirmed cases of severe academic malpractice are managed through internal disciplinary procedures and may be referred to the Fitness to Practise Panel in line with British Acupuncture Council professional standards.

6. External Review by the OIA

If you have completed all internal appeal stages and are still not satisfied with the outcome, you may be able to apply for an independent review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

The College will issue a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter once our internal processes are complete. This is the document you need to start a complaint with the OIA.

The OIA is an independent body and is not a further stage of our internal process. It reviews whether our procedures were followed correctly and if our decision was reasonable.

You must submit your complaint to the OIA within 12 months of the date on the COP letter.

7. Further Information and External Resources

For additional guidance on academic integrity and related procedures, please refer to the following resources:

- Jisc: For comprehensive guidance on academic integrity in the digital age, including advice on AI and contract cheating, please see Jisc's student-facing guidance:
- Jisc's Learner Guidance for FE on AI
- Pearson: For Pearson's official regulations on malpractice, which form the basis for our policy on Higher National qualifications, you can consult their guidance for centres:
- Pearson's Centre Guidance: Dealing with Malpractice and Maladministration
- The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA): For detailed information on the OIA's role, the complaints process, and what they can and cannot review, please visit their student hub:
- OIA Student Hub
- Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, which criminalised commercial cheating services and essay mills in England under Sections 5 to 7, brought into force by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 (Commencement No. 1 and Transitional Provision) (England) Regulations 2022, https://www.legislation.gov.uk