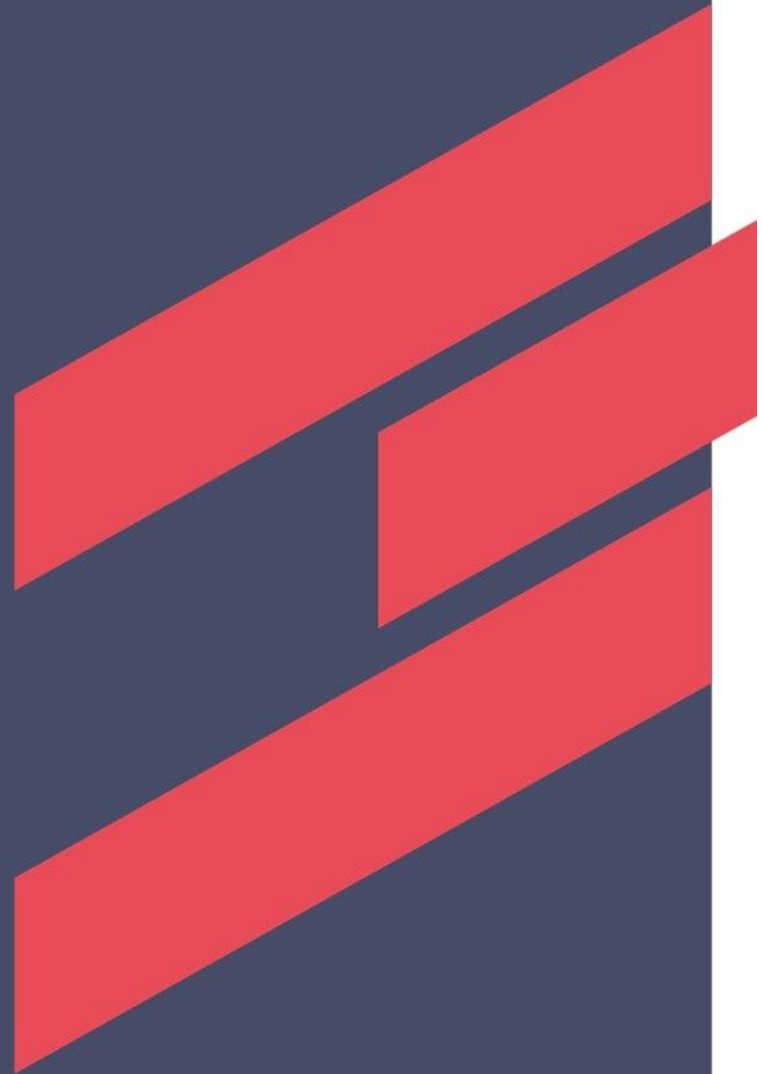




**Ambition
Institute**

NPQ Assessment Policy



NPQ Assessment Policy

Policy Owner	NPQ Lead Moderator
Version	1.2
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Applies to	All NPQ participants
Exceptions	N/A
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Section 1: Overview

1.1. Purpose

1.1.1. This policy outlines Ambition Institute's approach to NPQ assessment, including an overview of our assessment procedure and our individual procedures for extensions, exemptions, plagiarism and AI detection, malpractice, maladministration, and appeals. It aims to support you to complete your assessment successfully and to ensure fairness and transparency in the assessment process.

1.2. Scope

1.2.1. This policy applies to all NPQ participants across our delivery partner and national cohorts, as well as staff and external contractors assessing on NPQs.

1.3. Roles and Responsibilities

1.3.1. The NPQ Programme Team

- > Ensure that our national cohort participants and delivery partners are aware of this policy in advance of their assessment.

1.3.2. Delivery Partners

- > Ensure that their participants are aware of this policy in advance of their assessment.

1.4. Definitions

24-hour extension An additional 24-hour period granted to you in exceptional circumstances to complete your assessment beyond the initial assessment window.

Assessment exemption A provision allowing you to retain your assessment attempt and enter a future response window due to exceptional circumstances that prevent them from completing your response as planned.

Assessment window The designated period during which you must complete and submit your assessment.

Comparative judgement A method of assessment where multiple assessors comparatively evaluate each response, ensuring robust and accurate outcomes by aggregating several independent judgements.

Malpractice Any deliberate or accidental action, process, or failure to act that compromises the integrity and consistency of qualifications awarded by Ambition Institute.

Maladministration Poor administration or management of processes that compromise the integrity and consistency of qualifications awarded by Ambition Institute.

Plagiarism Submitting another's work as your own without acknowledgement or reference. This includes direct copying, collusion, and self-plagiarism (where you submit all or part of a piece of work for which you have been awarded another qualification). The use of new technologies or external sources (such as A.I. chatbots or platforms), for any reason, is also considered plagiarism.

Section 2: Assessment Procedure

2.1. What do I need to do to enter my assessment?

- 2.1.1. To enter your assessment, you must complete 90% of your NPQ content by your programme's deadline, in advance of your NPQ assessment. If you are not sure when your deadline is, you should contact Ambition Institute or your delivery partner.
- 2.1.2. If you do not complete 90% of your programme by the deadline, and do not contact your provider prior to the deadline, you will be withdrawn. Any unused submission attempts would be forfeit when you are withdrawn.
- 2.1.3. If you don't think you can achieve 90% completion by your deadline, contact Ambition Institute or your delivery partner prior to your 90% deadline. In extenuating circumstances, you may be able to arrange a deferral.
- 2.1.4. If you achieve 90% completion and are entered into the assessment but do not submit, you will lose a submission attempt (unless extenuating circumstances apply). If you think you're entitled to an exemption during the assessment window, due to extenuating circumstances, contact Ambition Institute or your delivery partner to discuss.

2.2. How will I be assessed?

- 2.2.1. Your final NPQ assessment will take the form of an 'open book exam' consisting of a case study and three questions.
- 2.2.2. You must provide a response to each question, written in prose. Each question will have a separate word limit, totalling 1,500 words.
- 2.2.3. Your NPQ assessment will take place across an 8-day window, where you will have 8 days to compose your responses.

2.2.4. Your assessment will focus on depth of knowledge rather than breadth. You will not be required to cover the whole NPQ content. Instead, you will demonstrate your in-depth knowledge of relevant aspects of the NPQ.

2.3. How will my response be assessed?

2.3.1. All assessment responses are initially ranked using comparative judgement. During comparative judgement, each response is examined and compared to other responses by a qualified assessor. The assessor uses a 'level of response' scheme to make a holistic judgement regarding which response provides the stronger answer to the questions. You can learn more about the principles involved in comparative judgement on Steplab.

2.3.2. This comparison process is repeated many times for each response (between 15 and 20 independent judgements). All judgements are then statistically aggregated to provide a reliable ranking for all responses. Research has shown that the reliability of this comparative judgement process is as strong as double marking each assignment against a traditional mark scheme.

2.3.3. A two-stage moderation process then determines which responses have passed the assessment. The first stage involves examining a broad range of responses, to identify a sub-sample of responses for further assessment. In the second stage, the sub-sample responses are closely scrutinised and assessed against the overall criteria for a pass. The moderator team makes independent judgements as to whether each response meets or does not meet the overall criteria for a pass.

2.3.4. **Overall criteria for a pass:** The response clearly demonstrates knowledge and understanding from the NPQ programme and has applied this to the case study. They have justified their answers with explicit reference to the sources within the case study, knowledge acquired from the NPQ programme, and research evidence they have read across the programme which is relevant to the problems they identify and the solutions they propose. The candidate's response represents a contextually valid application of 'learn that' and 'learn how to' statements from framework sections relevant to the case study. They have considered and communicated the response to an appropriate standard for a leader in that role.

2.3.5. At the end of this extensive moderation process, the lead moderator uses these aggregated judgements to determine the position within the ranked responses which will represent pass-fail boundary for that NPQ assessment. The classification accuracy of this process compares favourably to that typically achieved in national examinations such as GCSE or A Level exams.

2.3.6. In addition, a sample of responses are also moderated externally as part of a quality assurance process. The external moderator has the power to overturn the status of individual responses.

2.3.7. You must submit an answer to all questions within your assessment for your response to be entered into our comparative judgment process. If you do not answer one or more questions, we cannot assess your response, and you will receive a fail outcome.

2.3.8. Each answer you provide must be unique. If there is a duplication of the same answer across two or more questions or responses (if you submit more than once), we cannot assess your response, and you will receive a fail outcome.

2.4. What happens if I fail the assessment?

2.4.1. Unfortunately, participants occasionally fail their assessments. As each case study is different per attempt and cohort, we do not provide individual feedback on your response. Instead, we provide an examiner report detailing the performance across the cohort, including strengths and areas of development, providing feedback for all participants, along with a support package of guidance documents. This approach ensures that participants who have failed their assessment are able to use the examiner report and supporting documentation to set individual targets for their resubmission.

2.4.2. You have two submission attempts. In the event of two fail and/or disqualification outcomes, there will be no further opportunity for resubmission.

Section 3: Assessment extensions

3.1. Ambition's position on extension requests

3.1.1. You have an 8-day window to complete the assessment. There is no expectation that the assessment will take 8 days to complete. The 8-day window for completion provides flexibility for you to complete the assessment at a convenient time, considering personal and professional commitments.

3.1.2. Ambition sets the 8-day window for the assessment. However, deadlines set by the DfE for the end-to-end assessment process (including internal marking and moderation, external moderation, and outcome release) restrict the dates we can choose. It is, therefore, not always possible to avoid national or school holidays. Having an 8-day window is designed to support you to complete the assessment regardless.

3.1.3. Ambition releases the dates of the 8-day assessment window several months in advance, allowing you time to plan other commitments.

3.1.4. In some exceptional circumstances, Ambition may determine that a 24-hour extension to the 8-day assessment window is a reasonable adjustment to help you complete the assessment.

3.2. Eligibility for a 24-hour extension

3.2.1. Reasonable reasons to request an extension may include, but are not limited to:

- > Physical disability and/or associated illnesses
- > Neurodiverse condition
- > Accessibility issues
- > Bereavement

- > Serious illness which prevented you from working

3.2.2. You may only receive an extension if:

- > You contact Ambition (national cohort participants) or your delivery partner at least six weeks before your assessment, and ideally as soon as possible following your programme start. Or,
- > You experience exceptional circumstances during the window and contact Ambition (national cohort participants) or your delivery partner by 5pm on day five of your window. Extension requests received after this point cannot be approved in any circumstance. Please refer to Section 4: Assessment exemptions in these circumstances.

3.2.3. Once your 24-hour extension request has been approved, you are no longer eligible to request an assessment exemption if you cannot submit within the time granted. Please see Section 4: Assessment exemptions for more information.

3.3. How to request a 24-hour extension

3.3.1. You must request a 24-hour extension by contacting Ambition (national cohort participants) or your delivery partner if you are experiencing exceptional circumstances and/or believe you are eligible for a 24-hour extension.

3.3.2. Ambition offers 24-hour extensions at the sole discretion of the NPQ programmes team.

3.3.3. When Ambition receives a 24-hour extension request (from you directly or via your delivery partner), Ambition will ask you to complete a 24-hour extension request form.

3.3.4. If you are completing your NPQ with one of our delivery partners, the partner must support the 24-hour extension. If the partner does not support it, Ambition cannot confirm the extension.

3.3.5. Once Ambition receives the form, the programme team will review it. We will approve or deny the request and inform you of the outcome as soon as possible.

Section 4: Assessment exemptions

4.1. Overview and Ambition's position on assessment exemptions

4.1.1. If you have completed 90% of the programme content by your programme's named deadline, you will be entered into the assessment window. Once you have entered the window, regardless of whether you complete the assessment or not, you will have used one of your two submission attempts.

4.1.2. Ambition recognises that exceptional circumstances may arise after the named deadline, either shortly before or during the 8-day assessment window, which prevents you from completing your NPQ assessment.

4.1.3. In these circumstances, we can offer an exemption for this assessment window. You will retain your submission attempt from this window and will enter a future assessment window where you will have the opportunity to complete your assessment.

4.1.4. If you are awarded an assessment exemption, availability for future assessment windows will be communicated with you in writing, by your Ambition programme team or your delivery partner. Please be advised that there are a limited number of assessment windows each year.

4.2. When might an assessment exemption be appropriate?

4.2.1. Assessment exemption may be applicable in the following circumstances; however, this is not an exhaustive list:

- > Bereavement.
- > Serious illness which prevented you from working.
- > Pregnancy-related illness.
- > Technical issues for which Ambition is responsible, which prevented access to the case study. This applies where the disruption lasted over 24 hours or there was a further complication, therefore a 24-hour extension would not mitigate.
- > Significant role in Ofsted inspection in school.
- > Exceptional or extenuating reason(s) related to your protected characteristics.

4.2.2. We do not expect exemptions will be applicable in the following circumstances; however, this is not an exhaustive list:

- > Technical issues which are not the result of Ambition's systems.
- > Workload and/or wider school priorities.
- > School trips or planned work-related travel.
- > Planned school activities such as shows/events or staff training.
- > Personal travel/holidays.

4.2.3. An exemption request will not be considered if an assessment submission has been made.

4.2.4. An exemption request will not be considered if a request for a 24-hour extension has been approved. Please see Section 3: 24-hour extensions for more information.

4.3. How to request an assessment exemption

4.3.1. You must contact Ambition (national cohort participants) or your delivery partner if you are experiencing exceptional circumstances which you believe will prevent you from completing your assessment.

4.3.2. Ambition offers an assessment exemption at the sole discretion of the NPQ programme team.

4.3.3. You can request an assessment exemption any time from the date that you entered the assessment window until the assessment window has closed. Please note that due to wider

assessment timelines and processes we may not be able to grant an exemption regardless of the reason once the window has closed.

4.3.4. When Ambition receives an exemption request (from you directly or via your delivery partner) we will ask you to complete an assessment exemption request form.

4.3.5. If you are completing your NPQ with a delivery partner, the partner must sign to say they support the assessment exemption. If the partner does not support, we cannot offer the exemption.

4.3.6. Once Ambition receives the form, we will approve or deny the request. We will inform you of the outcome of your request as soon as possible.

Section 5: Plagiarism: similarity and use of AI

5.1. Ambition's position on plagiarism, including similarity and use of AI

5.1.1. Plagiarism affects Ambition Institute's reputation and credibility with customers, participants, and funding partners. Conducting plagiarism checks is an important part of our efforts to ensure the highest levels of academic integrity across our programmes. Undertaking appropriate steps to identify plagiarism also forms part of our contractual requirements with the DfE (Department for Education).

5.1.2. At Ambition Institute, plagiarism refers to presenting someone else's work, ideas, or analysis as your own without proper acknowledgement or referencing.

Plagiarism-related disqualifications fall into two categories:

- 1. Similarity** – instances where the work submitted is not fully original. This includes:
 - > Direct copying of text or ideas without citation
 - > Collusion (working with someone else or sharing work)
 - > Self-plagiarism (reusing all or part of work you have previously submitted to gain a qualification)
- 2. Use of AI** – using artificial intelligence tools or automated external platforms for any aspect of the submission for any reason. This includes:
 - > AI chatbots
 - > Generative AI platforms
 - > Tools that produce, summarise, translate, or structure content

5.2. How does Ambition identify plagiarism?

5.2.1. As part of our assessment process, you will be asked to declare your work as your own before you can press submit.

5.2.2. Ambition Institute utilises several tools to detect potential plagiarism including plagiarism checking software. Responses detected by the software are then further investigated by the assessment team.

5.2.3. If plagiarism is suspected, the assessment team will send their recommendation and evidence to our Plagiarism Panel for review.

5.2.4. The Plagiarism Panel will include the NPQ Assessment Lead (Lead Moderator), the NPQ Assessment Manager, a senior assessment representative from the Learning Design team, and the Associate Director of NPQ Operations.

5.2.5. If plagiarism is found to be a systemic or endemic process (e.g. plagiarism encouraged or assisted by Ambition Institute itself, delivery partners or schools/trusts), a review will be undertaken. Please see Section 6: Malpractice and Maladministration.

5.3. What happens when similarity or use of AI is identified?

5.3.1. Our formal plagiarism procedure follows these steps:

- > All responses within a similarity boundary (as identified by our chosen plagiarism detection software tools) will be individually investigated by several members of the assessment team.
- > In most instances, the similarity or AI percentage threshold is only used as an indicator for further checks to be conducted. In no way is the similarity or AI percentage threshold used in isolation as evidence that plagiarism has occurred, without further investigation.

5.3.2. Should any form of plagiarism be suspected, the assessment team will send their recommendations and evidence to the Plagiarism Panel.

5.3.3. The Plagiarism Panel will agree on the final outcomes. Where appropriate, Ambition Institute will undertake a review of the national cohort or the delivery partner to establish if they/the school were complicit in and/or aware of the plagiarism. Please see Section 6: Malpractice and Maladministration.

5.4. What happens when plagiarism is confirmed?

5.4.1. You will be informed of the outcome of any plagiarism review related to your response, either directly by Ambition Institute or via your delivery partner. You will be contacted directly at the same time we release all participant outcomes electronically at the end of the marking and moderation process. If you are informed that you have been disqualified due to similarity or use of AI, you will receive:

- > Further clarification as to why your response has been disqualified.
- > Next steps and timelines, including timelines for resubmission, if applicable.

5.4.2. Actions following confirmation of plagiarism and (as a result) a disqualification outcome:

- > Regulatory/external moderating bodies overseeing the qualification will be informed in accordance with guidelines.
- > If Ambition Institute or delivery partners are found to be at fault, a review will be conducted in accordance with Section 6: Malpractice and Maladministration.
- > The NPQ Assessment team will conduct an analysis of responses with plagiarism concerns detected and upheld during each assessment window, including breakdowns by programme and by delivery partner.
- > If you are on your first assessment attempt, you will be given one further opportunity to resubmit as per programme requirements.
- > If you are on your second and final assessment attempt, you will not be given any further opportunities to submit and will fail the qualification.

5.5. Appeals in cases of plagiarism

5.5.1. Please refer to Section 7: Appeals for more information.

5.6. Confidentiality

5.6.1. All cases of plagiarism detected in a participant's response will be recorded on the Ambition database, and this information will be retained in accordance with Ambition's Data Retention Policy.

Section 6: Malpractice and Maladministration

6.1. Roles and responsibilities

6.1.1. **Delivery partners and subcontractors:** Once you become aware of any suspected or actual malpractice or maladministration by yourself or your participants, you must report this to Ambition Institute within 24 hours. You must cooperate fully with us to review the suspected irregularity. See clause 6.2.1 for details to include in your report.

6.1.2. **Ambition employees, including internal faculty:** If you suspect malpractice or maladministration, you should notify the NPQ Assessment team, using the shared inbox. See clause 6.2.1 for details to include in your report.

6.1.3. **Participants:** If you suspect malpractice or maladministration, you should notify Ambition (national cohort participants) or your delivery partner. See clause 6.2.1 for details to include in your report.

6.2. Reporting cases

6.2.1. Where possible, your report should include:

- > Name and contact details of the person making the report.
- > Participant's name, TRN, school name and URN, if applicable.
- > Delivery partner name, if applicable.

- > Details of the qualification and the programme start date.
- > Nature of the suspected or actual malpractice or maladministration and associated dates.
- > In cases of suspected malpractice, the details of any individual(s) suspected of complicity.
- > Details and outcome of any initial investigation conducted by the delivery partner.

6.3. What happens next?

6.3.1. Once an allegation of suspected malpractice or maladministration is made, we will review the allegations. Subsequent withdrawal of the allegations will not impact this process.

6.3.2. Stage one – receipt of your report:

- > You will be asked to declare any personal interest you have.
- > Ambition Institute will acknowledge receipt of the report within two working days.

6.3.3. Stage two – investigation of your report:

- > Ambition Institute will decide whether there are reasonable grounds for the allegation.
- > If the allegation is upheld, Ambition will review the allegation.
- > If the allegation relates to a participant or third-party organisation, Ambition will notify them.
- > We endeavour to complete a review within ten working days.
- > If the review is likely to take longer, we will advise all parties of the revised timescale.

6.3.3.1. The Ambition Institute staff member conducting the review will:

- > Determine the cause of the irregularity.
- > Determine whether it was deliberate or accidental.
- > Recommend measures to mitigate the adverse impact, including changes to the process for the future.
- > Recommend any sanctions to participants or delivery partners (if applicable).

6.3.3.2. Whilst the review is underway, Ambition Institute may:

- > Suspend release of outcomes to the participant, delivery partner, or subcontractor under review.
- > Impose a temporary suspension on the delivery partnership/participant.
- > Reassign the implicated staff members to other duties until the review is complete.

6.3.4. Stage three – outcomes of the review:

6.3.4.1. Where the malpractice or maladministration is the fault of Ambition Institute or our staff members, Ambition will take the following steps:

- > In cases of malpractice, Ambition Institute will instigate formal HR proceedings with the staff member(s) responsible.

6.3.4.2. In cases of malpractice or maladministration, Ambition Institute will cover the cost of repeating any assessment processes required.

6.3.4.3. Where the malpractice or maladministration is the fault of the participant, Ambition will:

- > In cases of maladministration, allow participants to rectify this (proportionate administrative charges may apply).
- > In cases of malpractice, decide on a sanction based on the severity of the incident.
- > Notify relevant parties, including:
 - > The delivery partner.
 - > The participant's school.
 - > Regulatory or quality assurance bodies overseeing the award of the relevant qualification.

6.3.4.4. Where the malpractice or maladministration is the fault of a delivery partner:

- > We will seek to protect the participant(s) from the adverse effects of this malpractice or maladministration.
- > Where possible, we will avoid asking participants to repeat assessments already undertaken.
- > The Ambition Institute NPQ Associate Director with responsibility for delivery partner delivery will review whether the delivery partner has taken adequate steps to provide sufficient confidence to continue the delivery partnership. We may introduce additional oversight at the cost of the delivery partner or terminate the delivery partnership.

6.3.5. In all cases, Ambition Institute will:

- > Document steps taken, evidence gathered, and conclusions reached with the justifications, which we will store securely for a minimum of five years.
- > Notify you (the reporting party) of the outcome within five working days of the review.
- > Notify any participants, schools, and delivery partners involved within two working days of the review.
- > Notify regulatory or quality assurance bodies overseeing the award qualification.

6.4. Appeals or complaints

6.4.1. If you wish to appeal, please refer to Section 7: Appeals.

6.4.2. If you wish to make a formal complaint, please refer to our Complaints policy, which is available on our website.

Section 7: Appeals

7.1. How do I submit an appeal?

7.1.1. You can appeal your outcome for the following reasons:

- > A demonstration of bias against you.
- > Ambition Institute has failed to deliver to ethical standards.
- > An administrative error has occurred that impacted your response.
- > A reasonable adjustment you informed Ambition Institute about within the required timeframe has not been adhered to.
- > You have been disqualified due to plagiarism, your work was plagiarised without your knowledge or consent, and the other party is willing to confirm this in writing. Please note that Ambition cannot disclose the other party involved in a plagiarism case. You cannot appeal disqualification due to plagiarism without the other party assuming responsibility.
- > You have been disqualified due to plagiarism for any other reason and believe you have grounds to challenge this decision.

7.1.2. In each of the above circumstances, you must be able to explain the issue which you believe has occurred and provide appropriate evidence (where applicable).

7.1.3. You cannot appeal based solely on the 'fail' outcome, as there is a rigorous assessment and judging process, using comparative judgement with No More Marking (NMM), which determines outcomes.

7.1.4. You should contact Ambition Institute (national cohort participants) or your delivery partner to submit an appeal. When you do this, you will be sent our appeal form and this policy. You must complete and return the form to progress your appeal.

7.1.5. You have 4 weeks following the release of your NPQ outcome by Ambition to submit your completed appeal form.

7.2. What happens next?

7.2.1. Our NPQ assessment team will review your form and agree/disagree that there are suitable grounds for appeal. This decision will be communicated to you.

7.2.2. If your appeal is upheld, a senior member of our NPQ assessment team will conduct a review of your appeal form and, if appropriate, they will complete a review of your response and/or our processes in relation to your response. The Associate Director for your programme and the Associate Director of NPQ Operations may also be consulted during the appeal process.

7.2.3. Following the completion of the appeal process, a member of our senior NPQ assessment team will complete an appeal outcome form. This form, with the outcome of your appeal and the rationale, will be shared with you.

7.2.4. You will receive the outcome of your appeal no later than 8 weeks after your initial NPQ outcome is released.

7.3. What if I am still dissatisfied?

7.3.1. If you are not happy with the outcome of your appeal, you must inform us within 10 working days of receiving your appeal outcome. We will inform our external moderators, Etio, that you are not satisfied with the outcome of our appeal, and they will conduct an independent review.

Section 8: Version control

8.1.1. All Ambition policies are regularly reviewed by the Policy Owner. Feedback from employees and relevant stakeholders will be considered during the review process, and revisions will be made as necessary to reflect changes in laws, regulations, or company practices.

Version	Issue/release date	Summary of changes	Approver
1	July 2025	New policy, combining existing assessment policies	Programme Operations Committee
1.1	October 2025	Changed NPQ policy owner to NPQ Lead Moderator. Added Clause 2.1.	NPQ Lead Moderator
1.2	March 2026	Revision to section 5 on plagiarism	NPQ Lead Moderator

Section 9: Appendices

Appendix A: Plagiarism Process

Each submission is uploaded to plagiarism checking software.

Similarity: When reviewing similarity reports, a submission may show matches to various online or published sources. The Assessment Team reviews all papers that exceed the internal similarity thresholds set by the Assessment Team, as well as a sample of papers that fall within a monitored range below that threshold. These checks ensure that any potential concerns related to academic integrity are explored appropriately.

Use of AI: When reviewing AI-detection indicators, the Assessment Team reviews all papers that meet or exceed the internal AI-usage thresholds established by the Assessment Team. These indicators reflect the likelihood that portions of text may have been generated by artificial intelligence models, based on patterns that differ from typical human writing.

All papers (similarity and AI) that exceed internally set thresholds are then reviewed by a plagiarism review panel, which consists of the NPQ Assessment Lead (Lead Moderator), the Associate Director of NPQ Operations, the NPQ Assessment Manager and a senior assessment representative from the Learning Design team.

Disqualification will only occur once a paper has had this human review and there is a consensus across the plagiarism review panel that there is substantial similarity to another source (or range of sources) or substantial evidence of AI content.