

AI Use in NCTJ Assessments

Guidance for Assessors, Tutors, and Learners

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1. Overview

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly used across newsrooms and media operations. Learners studying for an NCTJ qualification should have an understanding of what AI is, how to use it, and how it will impact on their role as a trainee journalist going into the newsroom. It is also important that centres understand the risks posed by AI, such as mis-use of AI in NCTJ assessments.

This guidance has been provided to set out the NCTJ's arrangements for preventing the misuse of AI in NCTJ assessments. It identifies to what extent AI use may be permitted in NCTJ assessments, and outlines what is classed as misuse and therefore considered a form of malpractice.

Assessors, centres/training providers and learners should use this document and its contents to support the delivery of all NCTJ assessments. It should be read in conjunction with the NCTJ's malpractice and maladministration policy and sanctions policy, which are available to view on our website [here](#).

It is each centre/training provider's responsibility to have established measures in place to ensure that learners are aware of the importance of submitting their own independent work for assessment and for identifying potential malpractice.

2. What is AI Use

AI chatbots are AI tools which generate text in response to user prompts and questions. Users can ask follow-up questions or ask the chatbot to revise the responses already provided. AI chatbots respond to prompts based upon patterns in the data sets (large language model) upon which they have been trained. They generate responses which are statistically likely to be relevant and appropriate.

AI tools available include:

- ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com/auth/login>)
- Jenni AI (<https://jenni.ai>)
- Jasper AI (<https://www.jasper.ai/>)
- Writesonic (<https://writesonic.com/chat/>)
- Bloom AI (<https://huggingface.co/bigscience/bloom>)
- Gemini (<https://gemini.google.com/>)
- Claude (<https://claude.ai/>)
- Gauth (<https://gauthmath.com/>)
- Question AI (<https://questionai.com/>)
- Brainly (<https://brainly.com/>)

There are also AI tools which can be used to generate images, music or video, such as:

- Midjourney (<https://midjourney.com/showcase/top/>)
- Stable Diffusion (<https://stablediffusionweb.com/>)
- Dalle-E 2 (OpenAI) (<https://openai.com/dall-e-2/>)
- Soundraw (<https://soundraw.io/>)
- Musicfy (<https://create.musicfy.lol/>)
- Runway (<https://runwayml.com/>)
- LTX Studio (<https://ltx.studio/>)

3. Core Policy

- **General rule:** All work submitted for NCTJ assessments must be the learner's own independent work.
- **Permitted use and mandatory referencing:** AI tool usage is allowed **only** where explicitly permitted by the assessment instructions. When used, it must be fully and accurately referenced.
- **Malpractice:** Submitting AI-generated work as their own, using AI where forbidden, or failing to properly reference permitted AI use constitutes malpractice. This will be investigated under the terms of the NCTJ's malpractice and maladministration policy and may attract severe sanctions.

4. Scope and Applicable Assessments

Qualification / Level	Applicable Assessments
Level 3 Foundation Journalism	Assignment-based units
Level 3 Content Creator EPA	AM1 Project/Campaign Report & Presentation; AM2 Portfolio
Level 4 Diploma in Magazine Journalism	Magazine Project; Portfolio
Level 5 Diploma in Journalism	E-portfolios (Essential Journalism, Photography); Coursework (Radio, Video, Digital, Data)
Level 5 Journalist Apprenticeship EPA	AM1 Journalism Project/Report; AM2 Portfolio
Level 5 Practical International Journalism	E-portfolio of Evidence
Level 6 National Qualification in Journalism	E-logbook

Level 7 Senior Journalist Apprenticeship EPA	AM1 Journalism Project/Presentation; AM2 Portfolio
Level 7 Leadership and Management	Portfolio of Evidence

This guidance applies to non-exam assessments (coursework, portfolios, projects, and assignments) where internet access is available. This document is primarily intended to explain the regulations and provide supporting guidance in relation to these assessments.

Note on Exams: *Supervised exams using lockdown software (e.g., Safe Exam Browser, Proctorio) or live invigilation prohibit unauthorised internet access. Some exams may allow web access where appropriate.*

5. AI Use & Referencing Rules

When assessment guidelines allow AI assistance, learners must maintain absolute transparency.

If AI is used as a source, research tool, or content aid, you must follow the instructions for referencing AI usage for the assessment.

Generative AI must not be used to write written assessment components.

6. What is AI Misuse?

Using AI to avoid learning or misrepresent your skills is malpractice.

Examples of AI Misuse:

- copying or paraphrasing AI-generated text into an assessment.
- relying on AI for analysis, evaluation, or core writing tasks meant to show the learner's own skills.
- failing to declare or acknowledge AI tool usage on submission forms.
- providing incomplete, false, or unverified AI-generated references.

7. Penalties

Malpractice investigations follow the NCTJ malpractice policy and may result in:

- disqualification from the unit or assessment.
- a candidate ban of up to 12 months (or longer).
- total disqualification from the qualification or future NCTJ assessments.

8. Responsibilities

- **Centres and providers:** must educate learners on acceptable AI use and the possible consequences of using AI inappropriately in an assessment, update internal malpractice/misconduct/plagiarism policies, implement authentication measures (e.g., class supervision, intermediate draft checks, verbal discussions). They should also ensure tutors and assessors are familiar with AI tools, their risks and AI detection tools and promptly report suspected misuse to the NCTJ.

- **Tutors and assessors:** must stay alert to indicators of AI misuse (e.g. Americanised spelling/phrasing, unnatural tone, hallucinated references, over-generic responses) and notify the NCTJ immediately if authenticity is in doubt.

9. Identifying AI misuse

Comparison with previous work:

When reviewing a piece of work to ensure its authenticity, it is useful to compare it against other work created by the candidate. Where the work is made up of writing, you can make note of the following characteristics:

- Spelling and punctuation
- Grammar use
- Writing style and tone
- Vocabulary
- Complexity and coherency
- General understanding, comprehension and working level
- The mode of production.

Automated detection:

Online AI detection software can be used to analyse written content and determine the likelihood that it was produced by AI. For example:

- GPTZero (<https://gptzero.me/>)
- Quillbot (<https://quillbot.com/>)

These tools can be used as a check on candidate work and/or to verify concerns about the authenticity of a candidate's work. However, it should be noted that the above tools, as they base their scores on the predictability of words, will give lower scores for AI-generated content which has been subsequently amended by learners. The quality of these detection tools can vary and AI and detection tools will continue to evolve. The use of detection tools should form part of a holistic approach to considering the authenticity of learners' work; all available information will be considered by the NCTJ when reviewing any malpractice concerns.

10. Reporting AI misuse to the NCTJ

If AI misuse is detected or suspected by a tutor or assessor, it must be immediately reported to the NCTJ for investigation under the terms of our malpractice and maladministration policy, available on our website [here](#).

The NCTJ ensures that our staff, examiners, assessors and moderators are appropriately trained in the identification of malpractice and have established procedures for reporting and investigating suspected malpractice.

If AI misuse is suspected by an NCTJ examiner, assessor or moderator, or if it has been reported by a candidate or member of the public, details of the allegation will be relayed to the centre/training provider, if applicable. The NCTJ will liaise with the Head of Centre regarding the next steps in the investigation and how appropriate evidence will be obtained. The NCTJ will then consider the case and, if necessary, impose sanctions in line with our sanctions policy, available on our website [here](#).

The NCTJ will also take action, which can include the application of sanctions, where centre staff are knowingly accepting, or failing to check, inauthentic work for NCTJ assessments.

11. Review arrangements

The NCTJ will review this document annually as part of the NCTJ's annual self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary, in response to customer, learner or regulatory feedback.

If you would like to feedback any views, please contact us via the details provided at the end of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed in September 2027.

Additional helpful guidance and information on AI misuse may also be found in the [JCQ Guidance \(AI use in assessments: protecting the integrity of qualifications\)](#).

12. Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of this document, please contact our head of awarding on 01799 544014 or by email; details are available from our website at www.nctj.com.