



Adult Learning Within Reach

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WEA Policy for Malpractice in Assessment

1. Purpose

- To set out definitions/interpretations of malpractice in assessment.
- To set out the rights and responsibilities of learners, tutors, assessors, Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) and all education staff in relation to malpractice.
- To set out procedures for handling suspected malpractice.

2. Values

- Every effort should be made to ensure that learners, tutors, assessors and IQAs demonstrate appropriate behaviours to prevent malpractice in assessment.
- Information about appropriate behaviours and malpractice should be clearly and consistently communicated to each individual learner.
- Any suspected incidence of malpractice in assessment should be investigated in a manner that supports the individual to understand and account for the incident without pre-judgement.
- All suspected malpractice will be shared with the Accreditation Quality and Development Manager who will report confirmed malpractice to awarding bodies.

3. Scope and Definitions

Malpractice constitutes any act or practice (whether deliberate or resulting from neglect) that disrupts fair and equal opportunity for assessment or examination. Malpractice results in a breach of awarding body requirements that:

- compromises, attempts to compromise or may compromise, the process of assessment, the integrity of any qualification, or the validity of a result or certificate; and/or
- damages the authority, reputation or credibility of the provider or awarding body.

Learners:

Examples of learner malpractice include:

- breaching the security of assessment materials in a way which threatens the integrity of any exam or assessment — including early and unauthorised access to, removal of and sharing of assessment materials
- collusion with others when a task or assessment must be completed by an individual
- copying from others when a task or assessment must be completed by an individual
- inappropriate behaviour in an assessment that is disruptive and/or disrespectful to others. This includes talking, shouting and/or aggressive behaviour or language
- frivolous and/or offensive content — producing content that is unrelated to the assessment, that includes vulgarity and swearing or is discriminatory in nature

- impersonation — assuming the identity of another candidate or a candidate having someone assume their identity during an assessment
- plagiarism — failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of another person’s work as if it were the candidate’s own
- prohibited items — items that candidates must not have with them at their allocated seat in the exam room or during an assessed activity because they can give an unfair advantage, including: mobile phones, digital devices that are web-enabled or store information, books, notes, sketches or paper, pencil cases, calculator cases, calculator or dictionary (except in specified subjects) — unless any of these things have been approved by the awarding body as part of an assessment arrangement
- destroying the work of another learner.

Staff (tutors, assessors, IQAs and managers)

Examples of staff malpractice include:

- breaking the assessment/examination regulations of the awarding body
- acting in a manner that undermines the integrity of assessment/test/examination
- exerting pressure on staff to pass candidates who have not met the requirements for an award
- deliberate falsification of records to claim certificates
- failure to apply specified awarding body assessment conditions during assessments, such as limits on resources or time available to candidates to complete their assessments
- misuse of assessments, including repeated re-assessment contrary to requirements, or inappropriate adjustments to assessment decisions
- failure to apply appropriate processes to ensure fairness in the provision of assessment arrangements
- assisting learners with the production of answers - this would include providing the work of another learner taking the same assessment to use as a model for submission or providing excessive direction to a candidate
- failure to assess internally assessed units or course assessment work fairly, consistently and in line with national standards
- insecure storage, transmission or use of assessment tools, materials and marking instructions, resulting in a breach of assessment security
- failure to comply with requirements for accurate and safe retention of candidate evidence, assessment and internal quality assurance records
- failure to comply with awarding body procedures for managing and transferring accurate candidate data
- failing to register candidates within a qualification’s accreditation period
- making late registrations to the awarding body for qualifications in their lapsing period
- requesting late certification of learners after the certification end date
- failure to report and act upon known conflicts of interest
- for all qualifications, failure by a centre to investigate suspected centre malpractice
- for all qualifications, failure by a centre to report confirmed malpractice to the awarding body

- deliberately withholding information about circumstances which may compromise the integrity of any qualification and/or credibility of the awarding body or provider
- failure to take action as required by the awarding body or to co-operate with an investigation in relation to concerns of malpractice.

Malpractice and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Where the misuse of AI is identified, either by an assessor or an IQA, learners must be advised to re-submit work. Assessors and IQAs must actively check for the use of AI within assessment and must consider a range of assessment methods to ensure that learner assessment work is reliable, authentic and valid.

Tutors should ensure that learners are made aware of the appropriate and inappropriate use of AI, the risks of using AI and possible consequences. Learners should also be made aware of the consequences of plagiarism and malpractice.

The WEA expects final submissions to be completed by the learner without the use of an AI tool. In line with the JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres, learners are required to submit work for assessments which is their own and shouldn't be copied or paraphrased from another source such as an AI tool.

The use of AI within final assessment supports cheating and is malpractice. It must be reported, following the procedures below. Any learner or member of staff suspected of using AI for assessment will be subject to malpractice procedures.

4. Procedures

The WEA recognises that malpractice may arise from lack of self-confidence or misunderstanding of the aims and conditions of the assessment or examination, or from stress/pressure. All policies and procedures should be interpreted to maximise support to the person suspected, considering their particular circumstances. It may be more appropriate in some cases to address the circumstances as a priority rather than the individual behaviour. Undue stress, for example, might be reduced through appropriate support to prevent any recurrence.

In all cases of malpractice, the Accreditation Quality and Development Manager must be informed. They may, at their discretion, and after taking advice where necessary, decide on an alternative or non-disciplinary course of action. A written record of the circumstances, the decision and the reason for alternative or non-disciplinary action will be kept by the Accreditation Quality and Development Manager.

Stage 1 Prevention

- All learners should receive appropriate guidance from their tutor at induction and throughout their course that supports them to submit assessments properly. This includes how to research and reference sources.
- All learners should receive up to date and appropriate guidance on assessment or examination conditions and rules.
- All learners and staff should be informed about the content of the WEA's policy of Malpractice in Assessment.

Stage 2 Formal proceedings

- Malpractice should be reported immediately to a Course Manager and the Accreditation Quality & Development Manager.
- Any person suspected of malpractice will be contacted by the Course Manager who will outline the nature of the allegation and supporting evidence. This will be confirmed in writing. Care must be taken to ensure that the format of this communication and language used is fully accessible to the recipient.
- Any person suspected of malpractice must have an opportunity to respond – personally, and/or in writing within an agreed timescale.
- Any person suspected of malpractice will be invited to a meeting with the Course Manager and the Accreditation Quality and Development Manager where they will be able to outline the situation and their actions. They may be accompanied by an agreed advocate. Vulnerable learners must be accompanied by an advocate. Advocates can include parents, friends or others. Learners with additional support needs must be given appropriate assistance for any meeting, e.g. use of electronic note-takers or BSL interpreters.
- Alternatively, the malpractice process may be conducted by email or in writing.

All awarding bodies expect centres to bring concerns of candidate malpractice related to internal assessment to their attention if:

- the concern came to the centre's attention after final submission of internal assessment marks
- the concern relates to candidate malpractice for a qualification regulated by SQA Accreditation, Ofqual or Qualifications Wales
- any candidate does not agree with the outcome of their appeal
- there are other exceptional circumstances, e.g. the centre believes that the malpractice case involves a criminal act. Wherever it is believed that malpractice involves a criminal act, it must be reported to the police.

Stage 3 Outcomes

1. Allegations of cheating, malpractice and/or deliberate plagiarism in final assessments/exam will be reported to the Awarding Body in writing.

2. Where Awarding Body Regulations have been contravened, then a representative of the Awarding Body may wish to be involved in the investigation.
3. A written report of the WEA investigation and recommended actions and sanctions will be sent to all parties.
4. The person at the centre of the investigation will be informed of the WEA's Appeals Against Assessment policy.
5. Where Awarding Body Regulations have been contravened, then the Awarding Body may wish to impose sanctions on the future involvement of that person in assessments or examinations.
6. Candidates involved in an investigation of malpractice (whether candidate or centre malpractice) must not be awarded results for the assessments in question until the investigation is completed, the outcome decided and any appeal concluded.

Sanctions applied in the event of malpractice

Possible sanctions could include-

Learner

- A learner may lose credit for the individual unit or for all units in the qualification
- A learner may be disqualified from completing the qualification

A learner may be barred from submitting work or taking an examination towards the qualification for a period of time

Tutor/Assessor/IQA

- A tutor/assessor/IQA may be withdrawn from teaching/assessing/quality assuring the individual course
- A tutor/assessor/IQA may be barred from teaching/assessing/quality assuring that qualification in the future
- A tutor/assessor/IQA may be served with warning of disciplinary action by the WEA

Other education staff

- A member of staff may be barred from dealing with the qualification in the future
- A member of staff may be barred from dealing with all qualifications in the future
- A member of staff may be served with warning of disciplinary action by the WEA.

Record Retention

Where an investigation of suspected malpractice is carried out, the WEA must retain related records and documentation for three years. Records should include any work of the candidate and assessment or verification records relevant to the investigation.

In the case of an appeal to the awarding body against the outcome of a malpractice investigation, assessment records must be retained for six years.

In an investigation involving a potential criminal prosecution or civil claim, records and documentation should be retained for six years after the case and any appeal has been heard. If the WEA is in any doubt about whether criminal or civil proceedings will take place, it will keep records for the full six year period.

Date of this Review	Date of next Review	Policy reviewed and updated by:	Policy approved by:
July 2025	July 2026	Accreditation Quality & Development Manager	Director of Curriculum, Quality & Safeguarding