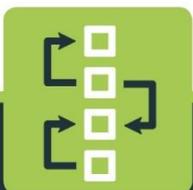


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Malpractice in Internal Assessment Procedure



Curriculum Planning &
Performance

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1. SCOPE

This procedure covers all cases of malpractice in internal assessment (by candidates or staff), referred to as candidate malpractice and centre malpractice. All cases of candidate malpractice and centre malpractice will be investigated and acted upon.

This procedure will be stored on the Staff Intranet under 'policies and procedures' and is subject to the Edinburgh College Document Control Procedure. Information relating to malpractice will be shared with staff through the Quality area of the Staff Zone on Moodle and also on the Staff Intranet.

2. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance on how instances of malpractice (or suspected malpractice) in internal assessment will be dealt with. It sets out the responsibilities of all concerned in declaring malpractice, engaging in the process of investigating the malpractice and carrying out actions to avoid potential malpractice situations.

3. LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY

The SQA Coordinator is the first point of contact if any potential malpractice is suspected. Any member of staff, candidate or other party should contact the coordinator in the first instance for guidance on how to proceed. It is the responsibility of all candidates and members of staff to take all reasonable steps to avoid malpractice occurring and to report it wherever it arises.

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4. KEY PRINCIPLES

The term 'malpractice' covers any actions and/or practices which threaten the integrity of the College's and SQA's assessment and certification procedures. The following list gives some examples, but is not exhaustive:

Candidate Malpractice

Examples include:

- Plagiarism – failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of another person's work as if it were the candidate's own.
- Collusion with others when an assessment must be completed by individual candidates.
- Copying from another candidate (including using ICT to do so).
- Personation – pretending to be someone else.
- Inclusion of inappropriate, offensive, discriminatory or obscene material in assessment evidence.
- Frivolous content – producing content that is unrelated to the assessment.
- Unauthorised aids – physical possession of unauthorised materials (including mobile phones, notes etc.) during the internal assessment.
- Inappropriate behaviour during an internal assessment that causes disruption to others. This includes shouting and/or aggressive behaviour or language.

Reporting and dealing with suspected candidate malpractice

For those qualifications that are subject to statutory regulation by SQA Accreditation or Ofqual, the SQA Coordinator at Edinburgh College will report any suspected case of candidate malpractice to SQA within 48 hours. The matter will also be reported to the police by the SQA Coordinator if the malpractice involves a criminal act.

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Candidates should report any suspected malpractice by other candidates to the subject lecturer/assessor, who will pass on this information to the Curriculum Manager.

If the assessor has been alerted to or suspects candidate (student) malpractice in relation to closed book/supervised internal assessment (e.g. misuse of exam material, making use of unauthorised aids such as notes, reference materials, mobile phones, copying from another student, personation etc.), the assessor should warn the student that they believe that they have breached assessment protocols and retain all papers, notes etc. for evidence purposes. (Lecturer discretion should be applied when deciding whether to intervene as soon as the breach is identified or wait until the end of the assessment to avoid disruption to other students).

In all cases of suspected candidate malpractice (closed book, open book etc.) the lecturer/assessor should put the assessment through Turnitin (where appropriate) then ask the Internal Verifier to double mark the assessment(s) and refer the matter to the Curriculum Manager (CM) to review the evidence. The lecturer/assessor, Internal Verifier (IV) and CM should then meet with the student to question them and review the evidence. If the team is satisfied that no malpractice has taken place, the student is informed and the assessment can be marked and resulted. If the team is satisfied that malpractice has taken place, the CM will inform the student, the assessor and the IV of the outcome, in writing, within 15 working days of the initial accusation being made.

The outcome may be:

- Fail the student for the outcome(s)
- Fail the student for the unit
- Fail the student for the course

If the student is not satisfied, they can invoke the college procedure for Appealing against an Assessment Decision (see Edinburgh College Assessment and Appeals Procedure).

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Once Candidates have exhausted the College's appeals process, they have the right to appeal to the SQA. Such appeals can only happen where:

- The College has conducted an investigation, the candidate disagrees with the outcome and has exhausted the centre's appeals process. It is likely that this will happen only in exceptional circumstances.

The process for an appeal to SQA should be given to the candidate when the result of the appeal is provided in writing to the candidate and is as follows:

1. Candidates should submit appeals to an SQA Director, in writing, within 15 working days of receiving written notification from their centre on the outcome of the appeal.
2. The appeal must include a detailed written account of why the candidate thinks that the centre's decision is wrong, and must include the candidate's evidence to support their case.
3. The SQA Director considering the appeal may seek additional information to assist their review of the case. They may consult experienced subject specialists who were not involved in the original decision when considering appeals against assessment judgement to help review the evidence.
4. The SQA Director will inform the candidate and the centre in writing of the decision within 15 working days of receiving all the information relevant to the appeal and will give reasons for the decision.
5. SQA will deal with the appeal as quickly as possible. If for any reason the matter cannot be resolved within this period, SQA will keep the candidate informed of progress.

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Centre Malpractice

Examples include:

- Misuse of assessments, including repeated reassessment contrary to requirements, or inappropriate adjustments to assessment decisions.
- Insecure storage of assessment instruments and marking guidance.
- Failure to comply with requirements for accurate and safe retention of candidate evidence, assessment and internal verification records.
- Failure to comply with SQA's procedures for managing and transferring accurate candidate data.
- Excessive direction from assessors to candidates on how to meet national standards.
- Deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates.

Reporting and dealing with suspected centre malpractice

Staff must report suspected malpractice by other members of staff to the SQA Coordinator. Likewise, candidates should report suspected malpractice by members of staff to the SQA Coordinator. Students and any members of the public can also report any instances of suspected malpractice to the SQA. The SQA will review the information presented and decide to: take no further action; bring the matter to the attention to the Head of Centre (HOC) or designate (college SQA Coordinator), asking them to investigate; investigate the matter directly; identify a third party to take forward the investigation.

The matter will also be reported to the police by the SQA Coordinator if the malpractice involves a criminal act.

All cases of suspected centre malpractice will be investigated. Where the college/SQA Coordinator is asked to investigate, investigations will be carried out by the Head of Faculty, Curriculum Manager and Quality Assurance Manager, and will include:

- Interviewing the member of staff under investigation

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- A review of assessment evidence and records,
- Seeking a second opinion for the internal verifier
- Interviewing other candidates and members of staff

The HOC or Centre Coordinator will submit a written report to the SQA detailing the circumstances of alleged malpractice and any remedial action being taken to address the instance of malpractice and to minimise the risk of malpractice in the future. The SQA then reviews the report and decides whether or not to refer the matter to the Malpractice Panel. Where the decision is not to refer the matter to the Malpractice Panel, the SQA notifies the HOC or Centre Coordinator in writing, also advising on any further actions (e.g. review of internal policies or procedures, arranging an external verification visit) that are required. The Centre Coordinator then communicates the outcome to relevant students and/or staff.

Communicating outcomes of investigations

The outcomes of investigations into suspected malpractice will be conveyed to the member of staff under investigation in writing within 15 working days of the allegation being raised. The outcomes will also be communicated in writing to the person who made the initial allegation, as well as the Head of Faculty and Curriculum Manager of the member of staff. Any actions to be taken as a result of malpractice being proven through investigation will be stated clearly in the written feedback on the outcome of the investigation. Where the allegation is proven, staff disciplinary procedures will be invoked.

Appeals against malpractice decisions

If a staff member does not accept a malpractice decision against them, they can lodge an appeal with the Head of Policy, Planning and Performance specifying mitigating factors, within 10 working days of notification of the results. The Head of Policy, Planning and Performance plus one Curriculum Head (from a different curriculum area) investigates if the staff member has grounds for an appeal to the Appeals Board. The only grounds for appeal to the Appeals Board will be: irregularities in following SQA guidelines within malpractice or information not known at the time of the investigation. The staff member making an appeal has the right to put the case personally to the Head of Policy,

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Planning and Performance and may choose to be accompanied by any office bearer of the Staff Unions. It is the responsibility of the staff member to arrange for the office bearer to be present.

In addition, where malpractice is investigated by SQA, decisions can be appealed. Centres have the right to appeal a decision where a case of reported malpractice by the centre has been confirmed through investigation by the SQA.

Centres also have the right to appeal a decision in the case of suspected malpractice by a candidate reported by the centre to the SQA.

Record retention

Where an investigation of suspected malpractice is carried out, Edinburgh College will 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 an investigation involving a criminal prosecution or civil claim, records and documentation will be retained for five years after the case has been heard.

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

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