



# Centre guidance: dealing with malpractice

For all Pearson approved centres delivering  
vocational qualifications

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Quality, Standards and Research

# Contents

Scope of guidance

Introduction

Guidance

Investigating alleged malpractice

Malpractice discovered by a centre

Dealing with malpractice

Penalties and sanctions applied by Pearson

Appeals

Regulatory references

Policy review date

Useful contacts

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The key role of Pearson Education Ltd (Pearson) is to secure standards for those qualifications we certificate. As part of our commitment to quality assuring standards and therefore protecting learners, Pearson provides guidance and support to help centres and their learners achieve their learning and development goals. Pearson also ensures that any regulatory requirements our regulators impose on us are met, and that we support centres to meet those requirements.

Our regulatory policies are integral to our approach and articulate in a consistent way how we meet our regulatory requirements. They are reviewed annually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. Pearson also provides guidance documents where appropriate.

## Scope of guidance

This guidance applies to all Pearson vocational qualifications including BTEC, NVQ, SVQ, ESOL and Self Regulated Framework qualifications.

For further information on Malpractice relating to GCSE, GCE, Project and Principal Learning and Vocational qualifications, please refer to JCQ document Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments – Policies and Procedures, the latest issue ([www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk)). Although the JCQ document covers vocational qualifications, this guidance document has been written to help Pearson centres which deliver vocational qualifications to develop their own malpractice policy and procedures: a requirement of approval.

In the context of compliance with awarding organisation obligations as set out by the appropriate regulators (Ofqual, SQA, DFES), Pearson will investigate and manage the effect of malpractice and maladministration. The Investigations Team investigates instances of non-compliance with the General Conditions for Recognition and the JCQ policies; it is independent and objective in its workings, and has the authority to review matter throughout the company and within any Pearson UK approved centre.

‘Malpractice’, which includes maladministration, means any act, default or practice which:

- compromises, or attempts to 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 any awarding body or centre or any officer, employee or agent of any awarding body or centre

Pearson may impose penalties and /or sanctions on learners or centres where incidents (or attempted incidents) of malpractice have been proven. Pearson UK is required to report cases of malpractice to the Regulator whenever evidence is found that results or certificates may be invalid.

## Introduction

The guidance should be read in conjunction with the JCQ document Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments – Policies and Procedures, the latest issue ([www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk)).

In the interests of learners and centre staff, centres need to respond effectively and openly to all requests for an investigation into an incident or a suspected incident of malpractice. Normally, Heads of Centres/Principals/Chief Executive Officer, or their nominees, are expected to supervise investigations resulting from allegations of malpractice. Heads of Centres/Principals/Chief Executive Officers or their nominees are required to inform learners and centre staff suspected of malpractice of their responsibilities and rights, see 6.15 of the JCQ policy.

For allegations of malpractice which involve fraud or a serious breach of examination security and implicate the Head of Centre or senior management, it will normally be expected that an investigation into the allegation will be carried out by the Investigations/Malpractice Team at Pearson.

Pearson reserves the right, in suspected cases of malpractice, to withhold the issuing of results/certificates while an investigation is in progress. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, results/certificates may be released or withheld.

## Guidance

Centres are required to have in place a published centre policy on malpractice in relations to Pearson vocational qualifications, based on this guidance.

Pearson requires centres to ensure that learners declare that their work is their own, for instance:

- For BTEC internally assessed units, internal assessors are responsible for checking the validity and authenticity of the learner's work.
- For learners' work taught and/or assessed using distance learning/assessment.
- For NVQs/SVQs and competence based qualifications, a centre and its learners must provide a written declaration that the evidence is authentic and that the assessment was conducted under the requirements of the assessment specification.
- A centre must verify the identity of a learner before they take an examination.

Many centres take positive steps to prevent or reduce the occurrence of learner malpractice. These steps often include:

- Using the induction period and the student handbook to inform learners of the centre's policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice.
- Showing learners the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources including websites. Learners should not be discouraged from conducting research; indeed evidence of relevant research often contributes to the achievement of higher grades. However, the submitted work must show evidence that the learner has interpreted and synthesised appropriate information and has acknowledged any sources used.
- Ensuring access controls are installed to prevent learners from accessing and using other people's work.
- Ensuring that learners do not take prohibited material into an examination room.
- Introducing procedures for assessing work in a way that reduces or identifies malpractice, e.g. plagiarism, collusion, cheating etc. These procedures may include:
  - Periods of supervised sessions during which evidence for assignments/tasks/coursework is produced by the learner
  - Altering assessment assignments/tasks/tools on a regular basis
  - The assessor assessing work for a single assignment/task in a single session for the complete cohort of learners
  - Using oral questions with learners to ascertain their understanding of the concepts, application, etc. within their work
  - Assessors getting to know their learners' styles and abilities.

For examples and illustrations of learner malpractice, centre malpractice and maladministration, please see Appendix 5 of the JCQ policy.

## Investigating alleged malpractice

When dealing with alleged malpractice in a centre, the Investigations/ Malpractice Team at PQS will deal primarily with the Head of Centre/Principal /Chief Executive Officer or a nominated representative. Pearson may require full access to a centre for investigation purposes.

As part of the investigation Pearson retains the right to:

- involve the learner and others in the investigation process
- Contact the learner (and/or the learner's representative) direct.

This may occur, for example, when a learner's account of events is at variance with that of the centre. Where learners under 18 are involved they may wish to be assisted by centre personnel, parents or guardians.

During the investigation period, Pearson may:

- refuse learner registrations/entries
- withhold the release of results/certificate
- withhold test/examination papers if the security of a test/examination is considered at risk pending the outcome of the investigation.

If malpractice is discovered by an Pearson representative (e.g. Standards Verifier (SV), Senior Standards Verifier (SSV), examiner, moderator) or has been reported directly to Pearson by a third party, Pearson will conduct an investigation in a form commensurate with the nature of the malpractice allegation. Such an investigation will require the full support of the Head of Centre/Principal/CEO and all personnel linked to the allegation.

In suspected cases of malpractice that involve a Pearson representative (eg SV, SSV), Pearson will conduct an investigation appropriate to the nature of the allegation.

## Malpractice discovered by a centre

Any malpractice or attempted acts of malpractice, which have influenced the assessment outcomes, must be reported by the centre to Pearson at the following email address: [pqsmalpractice@pearson.com](mailto:pqsmalpractice@pearson.com)

Any alleged incident of malpractice brought to Pearson's attention after the issue of certificates will result in a full investigation by Pearson. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, certificates may be recalled and declared invalid.

## Dealing with malpractice

Pearson reserves the right to carry out an independent investigation in full under any circumstances of alleged malpractice relating to a centre and full cooperation from the centre will be expected.

If a centre discovers or suspects anyone of malpractice, the centre must make the individual fully aware (preferably in writing) at the earliest opportunity of the nature of the alleged malpractice and of the possible consequences should malpractice be proven.

Pearson reserves the right to access any documents held by the centre in relation to alleged malpractice. Also, as required by the regulator, Pearson may report to the regulatory authorities certain cases (e.g. where members of staff are found to have committed malpractice) and include details of the action taken by the Head of Centre/ Principal, the Governing Body or the responsible employer. It may be necessary during this process to notify the funding authorities and for Pearson to share information with other Awarding Organisations. Pearson may have to notify the police in some cases of malpractice.

## Penalties and sanctions applied by Pearson

Where malpractice against a centre/member of staff/learner is proven, Pearson will have to consider whether the integrity of its assessments might be jeopardised if the centre/member of staff/learner in question were to be involved in future Pearson assessments. Pearson may take action to protect the integrity of its assessments in the future. This action may include for vocational qualifications:

- Pearson refusing to accept assessment/examination entries from a centre in cases where malpractice is established
- Pearson reserving the right to withdraw programme approval from centres where malpractice has been identified
- Pearson reserving the right to refuse to issue or to withdraw certificates.

## Appeals

Pearson has established procedures for centres that are considering appeals against penalties and sanctions arising from malpractice. Appeals against a decision made by Pearson will normally be accepted only from Heads of Centres/Principals/CEOs (on behalf of learners and/or members of staff) and from individual members of centre staff (in respect of a decision taken against them personally). Further information on appeals may be found in the JCQ Policy on Appeals: 'A guide to the awarding bodies' appeals processes'. It is also a requirement for centres offering Pearson vocational qualifications that they have a relevant appeals policy and that this is made available to any learner where a malpractice penalty has been applied.

## Regulatory references

Ofqual and SQA require all awarding organisations to establish and maintain their compliance with regulatory conditions and criteria. As part of this process, policies and guidance that relate to Pearson's status as an awarding organisation will reference the particular conditions and criteria that they address.

This guidance addresses the following regulatory criteria and conditions:

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
A8 Malpractice and maladministration
SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles (2011)
Principle 19 The awarding body must ensure that steps are taken to prevent malpractice and maladministration, inform SQA Accreditation when any cases, or suspected cases, of malpractice and /or maladministration are discovered, and develop and implement corrective action plans to prevent further occurrence.

## Review date

February 2015

## Useful contacts

For more information on Pearson qualifications please visit our website: [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com)

