

# Assessment Malpractice

## Of interest to:

- Curriculum managers
- Exam officers
- Heads of centres
- Heads of departments
- Learners
- NVQ training and assessment managers
- Programme leaders
- Teaching staff
- Training providers

## Qualifications:

- BTEC Customised Framework
- BTEC First Certificate and Diploma
- BTEC Higher National Certificate and Diploma
- BTEC Introductory Certificate and Diploma
- BTEC National Award, Certificate and Diploma
- BTEC Short Courses
- Entry Level Certificate (Life Skills/Skills for Working Life)
- NVQ

## Policy on assessment malpractice

Malpractice consists of those acts which undermine the integrity and validity of assessment, the certification of qualifications and/or damage the authority of those responsible for conducting the assessment and certification.

Edexcel does not tolerate actions (or attempted actions) of malpractice by:

- learners
- centres

in connection with BTEC qualifications or Edexcel NVQs.

Edexcel may impose penalties and/or sanctions on learners or centres where incidents (or attempted incidents) of malpractice have been proven.

## Introduction

Centres must be vigilant regarding assessment malpractice and where malpractice occurs it must be dealt with in an open and fair manner.

The policy on malpractice aims to:

- define malpractice in the context of assessment and certification for BTEC and Edexcel NVQ qualifications
- set out the rights and responsibilities, with regard to malpractice, of the learner, centre and Edexcel.

This policy replaces the previous policy on *Assessment Malpractice* (MAL 04-06).

In the interest 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/CEO, or their nominees are expected to supervise investigations resulting from allegations of malpractice. Heads of Centres/Principals/CEO or their nominees are required to inform learners and centre staff suspected of malpractice of their responsibilities and rights.

Edexcel 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.

For policy on malpractice relating to GCSE, AS, GCE, AVCE, GNVQ and Key Skills qualifications see the JCQ publication *Guidance for dealing with instances of suspected malpractice in examinations*, the latest issue ([www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk)).

## Guidance on assessment malpractice

### Links:

- Guidelines for dealing with instances of suspected malpractice in examinations (JCQ the latest issue, [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk))
- Appeals 04-07

### Policy Review:

Review date 2008

### Useful contacts:

For more information on Edexcel qualifications please contact Edexcel Customer Service

Tel: 0870 240 9800

You can also visit the Edexcel website:  
[www.edexcel.org.uk](http://www.edexcel.org.uk)

Centres are required to have in place, a published centre policy on malpractice concerning BTEC and Edexcel NVQ qualifications, based on this policy statement.

Edexcel requires assessors in centres to ask learners to declare that their work is their own, for instance:

- for BTEC internally assessed units, assessors are responsible for checking the validity of the learner's work.
- for NVQs, 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.

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.
- introducing procedures for assessing work in a way that reduces or identifies malpractice, eg 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, etc.
- ensuring access controls are installed to prevent learners from accessing and using other people's work when using networked computers.

## 1. Learner malpractice

Attempting to or actually carrying out any malpractice activity is not permitted by Edexcel. The following are examples of malpractice by learners; this list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by Edexcel at its discretion:

- plagiarism by copying and passing off, as the learner's own, the whole or part(s) of another person's work, including artwork, images, words, computer generated work (including Internet sources), thoughts, inventions and/or discoveries whether published or not, with or without the originator's permission and without appropriately acknowledging the source
- collusion by working collaboratively with other learners to produce work that is submitted as individual learner work. Learners should not be discouraged from teamwork, as this is an essential key skill for many sectors and subject areas, but the use of minutes, allocating tasks, agreeing outcomes, etc are an essential part of team work and this must be made clear to the learners
- impersonation by pretending to be someone else in order to produce the work for another or arranging for another to take one's place in an assessment/examination/test
- fabrication of results and/or evidence
- failing to abide by the instructions or advice of an assessor, a supervisor, an invigilator, or Edexcel conditions in relation to the assessment/examination/test rules, regulations and security
- misuse of assessment/examination material
- introduction and/or use of unauthorised material contra to the requirements of supervised assessment/examination/test conditions, for example: notes, study guides, personal organisers, calculators, dictionaries (when prohibited), personal stereos, mobile phones or other similar electronic devices
- obtaining, receiving, exchanging or passing on information which could be assessment/examination/test related (or the attempt to) by means of talking or written papers/notes during supervised assessment/examination/test conditions
- behaving in such a way as to undermine the integrity of the assessment/examination/test
- the alteration of any results document, including certificates
- cheating to gain an unfair advantage.

## 2. Centre staff malpractice

The following are examples of malpractice by centre staff. The list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by Edexcel at its discretion:

- failing to keep any Edexcel mark schemes secure
- alteration of any Edexcel mark schemes
- alteration of Edexcel's assessment and grading criteria
- assisting learners in the production of work for assessment, where the support has the potential to influence the outcomes of assessment, for example where the assistance involves centre staff producing work for the learner
- producing falsified witness statements, for example for evidence the learner has not generated
- allowing evidence, which is known by the staff member not to be the learner's own, to be included in a learner's assignment/task/portfolio/coursework
- facilitating and allowing impersonation
- misusing the conditions for special learner requirements, for example where learners are permitted support, such as an amanuensis, this is permissible up to the point where the support has the potential to influence the outcome of the assessment
- failing to keep learner computer files secure
- falsifying records/certificates, for example by alteration, substitution, or by fraud
- fraudulent certificate claims, that is claiming for a certificate prior to the learner completing all the requirements of assessment
- failing to keep assessment/examination/test papers secure prior to the assessment/examination/test
- obtaining unauthorised access to assessment/examination/test material prior to an assessment/examination/test.

### **3. Investigating alleged malpractice**

When dealing with alleged malpractice in a centre, Edexcel will deal primarily with the Head of Centre/Principal /CEO or a nominated representative. Edexcel may require full access to a centre for investigation purposes.

As part of the investigation Edexcel retains the right to:

- involve the learner and others in the investigation process
- deal with the learner (if aged 18 or above) and/or the learner's representative.

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

During the investigation period, Edexcel 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 Edexcel representative (eg EV, EE, examiner, moderator, etc) or has been reported directly to Edexcel by a third party, Edexcel 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 an Edexcel representative (eg EV, EE, etc) Edexcel will conduct an investigation appropriate to the nature of the allegation.

### **4. Malpractice discovered by a centre**

Centres are required to have in place a centre policy on malpractice relating to BTEC and Edexcel NVQ qualifications, based on this policy statement.

For BTEC and NVQ qualifications any malpractice or attempted acts of malpractice, which have influenced the assessment outcomes, must be reported by the centre to Edexcel.

For both BTEC and NVQ qualifications, any alleged incident of malpractice brought to Edexcel's attention after the issue of certificates will result in a full investigation by Edexcel. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, certificates may be recalled and declared invalid.

## **5. Dealing with malpractice**

It is the responsibility of Heads of Centres/Principals or their nominees to carry out an investigation into allegations of malpractice. Investigations into alleged malpractice against the Head of a Centre/Principal will normally be conducted by the Chair of the Governing Body of the centre, the Vice Principal, the responsible employer or an appointed nominee. The alleged incident must be reported to Edexcel at the earliest opportunity.

Edexcel 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.

If a centre is alleging an individual may have been involved in act of malpractice, the centre must give the individual the opportunity to respond (preferably in writing) to the allegations made. Centres must also inform such individuals of the avenues for appealing should a judgment be made against them.

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

## **6. Penalties and sanctions applied by Edexcel**

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

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

For NVQs, Edexcel will work in accordance with the NVQ Code of Practice.

## 7. Appeals

Edexcel has established procedures for centres that are considering appeals against penalties and sanctions arising from malpractice. Appeals against a decision made by Edexcel will normally be accepted only from Heads of Centres/Principals/CEO (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 qualification policy statement on *Appeals 04-07*.

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