

TITLE:

Assessment Malpractice SOP

Summary of Contents:

The purpose of the procedure is to define and outline the procedures to manage malpractice in assessment.

Responsible Owner(s):

Deputy Chief Officer, Quality, Excellence and Development

REVIEW INFORMATION

Reviewed: April 2016
January 2019
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Next Review Due: February 2025

Requires CMT Approval (yes/no): Yes

Previous Reference (for control purposes):

Date Created:

April 2015

Last CMT Approval Date:

27 June 2023

1.0 Background

This standard operating procedure relates to the management of malpractice in assessment by students and staff for all awarding organisations. It aims to:

- Identify and minimise the risk of malpractice by staff or students;
- Respond to any incident of alleged malpractice promptly and objectively;
- Standardise and record any investigation of malpractice to ensure openness and fairness;
- Impose appropriate penalties and/or sanctions on students or staff where incidents (or attempted incidents) of malpractice are proven and;
- Protect the integrity of SERC and the qualifications delivered on behalf of awarding organisations.

In order to do this, the centre will:

- Seek to avoid potential malpractice by using the induction period and the learner handbook to inform learners of the centre's policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice;
- Show learners the appropriate formats to record cited texts, materials researched through artificial intelligence tools, and information from other sources;
- Ensure that all written assessments submitted by students on programmes at Level 3 and above, are checked through College approved plagiarism checker software;
- Ask learners to declare that their work is their own;
- Ask learners to provide evidence that they have interpreted and synthesised appropriate information, including materials generated through artificial intelligence tools and acknowledged any sources used;
- Make the individual fully aware at the earliest opportunity of the nature of the alleged malpractice and of the possible consequences should malpractice be proven;
- Give the individual the opportunity to respond to the allegations made;
- Inform the individual of the avenues for appealing against any judgement made;
- Document all stages of any investigation.

2.0 Scope

This SOP applies to all staff involved in preparation, grading and assessment to meet awarding organisation requirements and students undertaking assessments.

3.0 Definition of Malpractice by Students

This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by SERC at its discretion:

- Plagiarism of any nature;

- Submissions for assessment that consist of substantial sections of unmodified output from generated artificial intelligence;
- Collusion by working collaboratively with other learners to produce work that is submitted as individual learner work;
- Copying (including the use of ICT to aid copying);
- Deliberate destruction of another's work;
- Fabrication of results or evidence;
- False declaration of authenticity in relation to the contents of a portfolio or coursework;
- 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, or test.
- Taking prohibited material into an examination room.

4.0 Definition of Malpractice by Staff

This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by SERC at its discretion:

- Improper assistance to candidates;
- Inventing or changing marks for internally assessed work (coursework or portfolio evidence) where there is insufficient evidence of the candidates' achievement to justify the marks given or assessment decisions made;
- Failure to keep candidate coursework/portfolios of evidence secure;
- Fraudulent claims for certificates;
- Inappropriate retention of certificates;
- 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 college 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, or 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;
- 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.

5.0 Procedure to Prevent Malpractice by Students and Staff

During induction through the student handbook students will be informed about potential malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice.

To minimise possible malpractice students will be introduced to the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources and informed that they

may be asked to provide evidence that they have interpreted and synthesised appropriate information and acknowledged any sources used.

A declaration from students that the work is their own will be required on material submitted for assessment.

Staff should be informed about potential malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice as part of curriculum development and standardisation events.

6.0 Investigating malpractice

Where malpractice is alleged an investigation will take place in a form commensurate with the nature of the malpractice allegation. The Head of Centre should be informed and will support all investigations. Incidents will be investigated within 15 working days of the alleged incident.

For students the Student Disciplinary and Behaviour Policy and the Student and Trainee Disciplinary and behaviour SOP process, recording mechanisms and penalties will be followed. In addition, the Higher Education Academic Misconduct SOP will be followed. For staff the disciplinary procedures will be followed.

The awarding organisation will be informed in writing at the earliest opportunity of any instances of malpractice, attempted acts of malpractice or maladministration, which have the potential to affect the delivery and/or assessment of qualifications delivered. The awarding organisation will be notified at the earliest opportunity and where possible prior to the commencement of the internal investigation. The Head of Centre, or an appointed nominee will inform the awarding organisation of malpractice using the Joint Council for Qualifications processes. This is:

Notification of the appropriate awarding organisation **immediately** of all alleged, suspected, or actual incidents of malpractice. The only exception to this is candidate malpractice discovered in coursework or non-examination assessments before the authentication forms have been signed by the candidate. If staff malpractice is discovered in coursework or non-examination assessments, the head of centre, or an must inform the awarding organisation immediately, regardless of whether the authentication forms have been signed by the candidate(s).

Notify the awarding organisation(s) whose qualifications are involved in an incident of malpractice using the appropriate Joint Qualification form.

Act as the liaison between the awarding organisation and centre staff by forwarding correspondence and evidence and/or provide staff contact information to enable the awarding organisation to do so.

Speedily and openly make available information as requested by an awarding organisation.

Enforce any actions or penalties required by the awarding organisation.

Maintain good communication with the awarding organisation throughout the process and follow-up.

7.0 Penalties

The penalties for staff relate to the Staff Disciplinary Procedures.

For HE students the Academic Misconduct SOP applies.

For FE Students the Student Behaviour and Disciplinary SOP and Policy applies.

Where a first offence or minor offence is agreed a likely outcome is stage one or two of the process with warnings and requirement for resubmission. Where a major or repeated offence occur gross misconduct and the relevant penalties may apply. There should always be reference to the Awarding Organisation assessment principles and requirements.

8.0 Communication Plan

This SOP will be available on the College Intranet in the Learning Engine and reflected in student handbooks and programme documentation.

9.0 Review

This SOP will be reviewed biennially or sooner to reflect changes in circumstance.