



Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

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1. Policy principles

This policy sets out NCFE's framework to ensure we are maintaining the integrity and credibility of our qualifications and assessments. In particular, the policy reflects the principles of fairness, transparency, proportionality, consistency, and accountability in the prevention, identification and management of malpractice and maladministration (GCoR PR6).

It does not replace any of the requirements contained within. Non-adherence to our policies may itself constitute as maladministration, malpractice, and/or a breach of the Centre Agreement.

2. Introduction

This policy supports our responsibility to ensure that qualifications are awarded fairly and consistently and has been developed in line with Ofqual's regulatory principles. We adopt and apply the JCQ Suspected Malpractice guidance in full for all regulated qualifications. We retain responsibility for investigating cases, determining outcomes, and applying any necessary sanctions in line with JCQ guidance and this policy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the NCFE Centre Agreement, NCFE's mandatory policies, and all other required documentation. It must also be considered alongside Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition particularly Condition A8, as well as the regulatory requirements of Qualifications Wales and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

In addition, this policy should be read in accordance with **Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures**, published by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), which is available on the JCQ website (www.jcq.org.uk).

2.1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all instances of suspected malpractice and maladministration occurring at any stage of the qualification lifecycle – including registration, assessment, marking, moderation, certification, and appeals – are managed in a way that is fair and clearly defines definitions and procedures. Any sanctions are proportionate, and clear roles and responsibilities are defined to protect qualification integrity.

2.2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all NCFE regulated qualifications, assessments, and assessment-related activities
- all approved centres, their staff, contractors, affiliates, and learners
- anyone involved in the delivery, assessment, internal quality assurance, examination administration, or certification of NCFE qualifications
- any individual reporting suspected malpractice or maladministration
- investigations conducted alone or jointly with other awarding organisations where incidents or evidence span over multiple organisations.

This policy does not apply to appeals, complaints, or whistleblowing; these are covered by separate NCFE policies.

2.3. Responsibilities/duties

Provider Assurance Manager is responsible for ensuring that NCFE's malpractice and maladministration prevention, detection, investigation, and reporting processes are carried out effectively, consistently, and in alignment with regulatory requirements.

Document owner is accountable for the accuracy and compliance of this policy, in alignment with relevant regulatory requirements, and reflective of current organisational practices.

Provider Assurance Officers are responsible for supporting the effective delivery of NCFE's malpractice and maladministration framework, including undertaking case handling and evidence review, liaising with centres to gather required information, monitoring compliance with reporting requirements, maintaining accurate case records, and assisting in the prevention, identification, and escalation of risks to assessment integrity. The team ensure that investigations are conducted in line with NCFE procedures and regulatory expectations, and that clear, timely communication is maintained with all stakeholders.

Joint centre investigations

Where an incident involves more than one awarding organisation, we will agree joint investigation arrangements in line with JCQ requirements. It will be agreed which awarding organisation will be designated lead for coordination. All involved awarding organisations will agree roles and responsibilities from the onset.

NCFE will:

- provide clear and accessible guidance to all centres
- take all reasonable steps to prevent and mitigate malpractice
- investigate suspected or alleged malpractice fairly, promptly, and robustly
- withhold results/certificates if necessary
- share intelligence with regulators and other awarding organisations when appropriate
- apply sanctions proportionately and consistently
- protect individuals reporting concerns where possible
- maintain accurate records of all cases.

2.3.1 Centre responsibilities

Centres must:

- maintain a robust internal system to prevent and detect malpractice
- have clear internal malpractice procedures aligned to NCFE's requirements
- report all suspected or confirmed malpractice to NCFE immediately
- cooperate fully and promptly with NCFE investigations
- provide all requested evidence in the required format and timescales
- ensure learners and staff understand malpractice definitions and consequences
- ensure secure handling and storage of assessment materials
- ensure exam officers and assessors are trained, resourced, and supported.

Failure to comply may itself be treated as malpractice and a breach of NCFE’s Centre Agreement.

2.3.2 Learner responsibilities

Learners must:

- adhere to all regulations and guidance connected to our assessments
- submit only their own, authentic work
- not access or share unauthorised materials
- report any concerns relating to assessment integrity.

2.4. Definitions

Word/acronym	Definition
Malpractice	<p>Malpractice is usually considered a deliberate act to breach assessment conditions to gain an unfair advantage.</p> <p>It includes any act, omission, or practice which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breaches regulatory requirements or NCFE assessment rules • compromises, or attempts to compromise, the integrity of assessment or the validity of a learner result • damages confidence in NCFE qualifications • provides an unfair advantage or disadvantages others. <p>Examples include (not exhaustive):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment material breaches • unauthorised assistance to learners • plagiarism, collusion, or misuse of AI tools • falsification of records • failure to maintain secure storage of assessment materials • failure to report suspected malpractice.
Maladministration	<p>Maladministration refers to any actions that compromises the integrity, security, or confidentiality of assessments, potentially leading to results that don't accurately reflect a student's work.</p> <p>Maladministration is often considered an accidental or unintentional act which breaches the integrity of assessment or brings assessment results into disrepute.</p>
JCQ	Joint Council for Qualifications
Centre staff malpractice	Malpractice committed by any member of staff, contractor, volunteer, or third party working on behalf of a centre such as exam paper leaks.

Centre staff maladministration	Systemic or organisational failings within a centre that compromise assessment integrity (including failures in leadership, quality assurance, security or compliance).
Learner malpractice	Malpractice committed by a learner in any form of assessment (internal or external).

2.5. Location

Available within QMS SharePoint and an external copy via the NCFE website.

3 Prevention measures

NCFE requires centres to implement prevention measures including, but not limited to:

- staff induction and annual compliance training
- secure storage and handling of examination and assessment materials
- delivery of JCQ/NCFE candidate notices before all assessments
- use of plagiarism detection tools and authenticity checks
- robust conflict-of-interest management
- clear processes for access arrangements and special considerations
- internal monitoring and internal quality assurance systems.

4. Identification and reporting of malpractice and maladministration

Please refer to section 4 of JCQ Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures for further information on identifying and reporting: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/>

4.1 Reporting to NCFE

Centres must report all suspected or actual malpractice to NCFE immediately using the NCFE Malpractice Notification Forms available via the NCFE website, or by sending JCQ's M1, M2 and M3 forms to providerassurance@ncfe.org.uk

4.2 Exceptions (in line with JCQ)

Plagiarism/AI misuse in coursework before candidate authentication may be managed internally; however, centres must retain evidence of internal handling.

4.3 Whistleblowing

NCFE encourages disclosures relating to suspected malpractice. Anonymous disclosures will be reviewed, though NCFE may be limited in the action it can take.

5. NCFE investigation process

NCFE will follow a fair and robustly structured process when conducting investigations which will include assessing the nature and seriousness of the allegation, risk to assessment integrity, whether safeguarding or criminal concerns exist, and whether any immediate actions for example withholding results are required.

This will include determining investigative approach, information gathering, evaluating all evidence to establish whether the allegations have been appropriately substantiated, and a conclusion based on the balance of probabilities. Any irregularities identified will be escalated via our malpractice procedures.

6. Appeals

Centres may appeal in line with NCFE and JCQ's Appeals Policies and guidance, and centres can also make an appeal on the behalf of their learners, staff members, and affiliated parties.

7. Sanctions

When imposing sanctions on a centre, we understand that learners may be affected. We recognise our regulatory duties towards registered learners, and we will take steps where appropriate to ensure that they are supported. As outlined, sanctions may also be placed directly against learners.

NCFE will ensure all sanctions will be proportionate, evidence-based, and consistently applied. Any sanctions imposed will be in full conjunction with the NCFE Centre Agreement and NCFE's Sanctions Policy and all other mandatory documentation, including (section 7) [JCQ's Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures](#).

8. Safeguarding and wellbeing

NCFE will consider:

- the wellbeing of learners and staff throughout the investigation
- the need for an appropriate adult during interviews
- additional support for individuals with disabilities or learning needs
- mandatory reporting to safeguarding authorities where risk is identified.

9. Initial Equality Impact Assessment

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy, and no concerns were raised.

10. References to associated documents

Available within [Quality Management System - QMS - All Documents](#)

- NCFE Complaints Procedure (CST-002)
- NCFE Whistleblowing Policy (ARA-051)
- NCFE Appeals Policy (ADEL-002)
- NCFE Anti Bribery and Corruption Policy (ARA-004)
- NCFE Data Protection (RDP-032)
- GDPR
- NCFE Centre Agreement (CS-LC-001)

11. Implementation and dissemination

This policy will be available to all internal stakeholders via the Quality Management System and will be made available to all external stakeholders via NCFE's website.

12. Monitoring arrangements

NCFE will review this policy annually or earlier if required, monitor trends in malpractice, and raise any risks including monitoring any moderation irregularities escalated via malpractice procedures. Share learning and updates with centres. Improve processes when necessary or aligned with regulatory requirements

13. Data retention and confidentiality

NCFE will handle all information in line with GDPR, the Data (Use and Access Act) 2025, and the Data Protection Act 2018, and will retain records in line with NCFE's Retention Policy.

13.1. Disclaimer: Submission of original documentation

To protect personal information, please do not send original documents to NCFE via post. We cannot accept responsibility for the loss, damage, or return of any original documentation sent to us.

Where documentation is required, we request that you provide certified copies or high-quality scanned versions instead. This approach helps protect your documents and ensures a more secure and efficient service.