

How to deal with candidate malpractice

As the summer exams series approaches, one of the most discussed topics amongst exams officers and senior leaders is the issue of malpractice and how to deal with it if it occurs.

Quite often, candidates unwittingly engage in malpractice, yet whether this is intentional or not, there are clear guidelines for centres to follow.

JCQ has produced, on behalf of the awarding bodies, a publication – [Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments: Policies and Procedures, 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015](#) - which clearly sets out the procedure and sanctions associated with all forms of malpractice. It is the responsibility of Heads of Centres, examination officers and others involved in managing and delivering general and vocational qualifications to be aware of this document.

Below are some steps to avoiding candidate malpractice, divided into two sections – **'Prevention'** and **'Action'**.

Prevention

Firstly, you can take steps prior to the exam series and individual exams to prevent malpractice. (The list below is not exhaustive):

Utilise school assemblies

Ensure that you are given, at the very least, a 'slot' in relevant assemblies to explain to those candidates undertaking external assessments/examinations the definition of 'malpractice' and the consequences for those engaged in such activity.

Utilise these assemblies as an opportunity to explain 'exam protocol' to candidates. Highlight the importance of reading exam notices, the role of invigilators (introduce your invigilator team to the candidates) and other rules and regulations associated with external examinations

Brief candidates

As well as verbally briefing candidates during assemblies (see above), supply each candidate with written information of 'exam room etiquette', the 'dos' and, more importantly 'don'ts' associated with exam room behaviour.

Use [JCQ's Information for Candidates resources](#) and our [Candidate Exam Handbook template](#) to help you devise an information booklet for candidates.

Brief parents

Supply parents with information on the behaviour expected of students before, during and after each exam.

Clarity of information to parents may help to acquire their support in reiterating to candidates the expected levels of behaviour during exams. Also, you may choose to highlight page 26 of [Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments: Policies and Procedures, 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015](#) which clarifies 'Sanctions and penalties applied against candidates' and Appendix 5 which is a table of offences and a range of penalties which are applied once malpractice has been identified.

Brief teaching staff – particularly Heads of Department

Attend Heads of Department meetings to confirm their role in preparing candidates for external exams.

Ask Heads of Department to ensure that candidates taking their exams have been reminded of the consequences of engaging in malpractice during lessons, and that all staff within their department are helping to reinforce these messages.

Involve SLT before the exam series and on exam days

Involve SLT in conveying key messages to candidates/parents/teachers around exam malpractice.

Ask SLT to arrange and lead assemblies prior to exams series and to be around at the start of each exam session to ensure good behaviour.

SLT should also deal with any instances of malpractice.

Action

Once malpractice has taken place, there are clearly defined steps you must take in your centre to ensure that this dealt with. (The list below is not exhaustive.)

The role of your invigilators

In the event of suspected malpractice, invigilators must be clear over what is expected of them, as they play a pivotal role in this process.

Invigilators must warn the candidate that he/she may be removed from the exam room and that the relevant awarding body will be informed and that they may choose to disqualify them. The invigilator must also record what has happened using an [Exam Room incident log](#).

Section 17 of the [Instructions for Conducting Examinations \(ICE\) booklet](#) provides information on the role of invigilators in the event of candidate malpractice.

Record what has happened

Ensure that each exam room has an [Exam Room incident log](#) and that your invigilators are aware of the importance of completing this as a record of what has happened.

Invigilators should get into the habit of recording all exam room activity, from the candidate(s) who requested a toilet visit, to those finishing early. Such evidence, however obscure, may prove invaluable during any subsequent investigation.

Collate evidence

Appendix 3 of [Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments: Policies and Procedures, 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015](#) provides a list of actions/materials an exams officer should collate in order to enable SLT/Head of Centre to conduct an investigation and submit a report.

Evidence should be collated to answer/satisfy the following:

- information about how the centre makes candidates aware of the awarding bodies' regulations;
- seating plans;
- any unauthorised material found in the examination room;
- photographic evidence of any material written on hands / clothing etc;
- any candidate work / associated material which is relevant to the investigation;
- any other relevant evidence.

Involve SLT

Ensure that SLT/Head of Centre deal with instances of malpractice immediately. Inform them that they are duty-bound to report incidents of malpractice via [Form JCQ/M1](#).

SLT/Head of Centre should conduct an investigation and submit a report to the relevant awarding body.

The investigation should determine:

- who was involved in the incident, including candidates, members of staff and/or invigilators;
- the facts of the case, as established from evidence and/or statements from those involved.

The report should include:

- a clear account, as detailed as necessary, of the circumstances;
- details of the investigations carried out by the centre;
- written statements from any teachers, invigilators or other members of staff concerned, which must be signed and dated;
- written statements from the candidates concerned, which must be signed and dated.

Inform candidates and parents of the ‘malpractice process’ and possible sanctions

In the event of candidate malpractice, inform parents and candidates of the ‘suspected malpractice’ committed, what will happen next, and possible sanctions. Use Appendix 5, page 40 of [Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments: Policies and Procedures, 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015](#) to explain how the actions of the candidate constitute malpractice, and the possible sanctions which may be applied.

Inform the relevant awarding body

If you suspect candidate malpractice, your Head of Centre **must** contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible, and present the information you have collated.

Although you will need to use JCQ forms such as JCQ/M1, do not **contact JCQ**.

Malpractice is dealt with by the relevant awarding body and not the JCQ. By contacting JCQ you are simply delaying the investigative process.

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