

HiQual UK

MALPRACTICE AND MALADMINISTRATION POLICY

HQUK-POL-MAL-001

Document Control Item	Details
Organisation	HiQual UK
Policy Title	Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
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Policy Owner	Sarah Williams, Head of Quality Assurance
Approved By	HiQual UK Academic and Standards Committee
Review Cycle	Annual, or earlier where regulatory, operational or organisational changes require review
Classification	Public Policy
Applies To	Learners, Approved Centres, Assessors, Internal Quality Assurers, Tutors, Invigilators, HiQual UK Personnel and Relevant Stakeholders

Framework for preventing, identifying, investigating and managing malpractice and maladministration

1. Purpose

HiQual UK is committed to protecting the integrity, credibility and reliability of its qualifications and assessments.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a fair, consistent, proportionate and evidence-based framework for preventing, identifying, reporting, investigating and resolving suspected or confirmed malpractice and maladministration.

The policy is intended to protect learners, centres, assessment personnel and HiQual UK from practices that may compromise assessment integrity, academic standards, certification or confidence in qualifications.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all HiQual UK qualifications, assessments, approved centres, learners, assessment personnel and organisational activities that may affect qualification integrity.

It applies to suspected or confirmed malpractice or maladministration involving learners, centres, assessors, internal quality assurers, tutors, invigilators, administrators, contractors, HiQual UK personnel or other persons acting on behalf of or in connection with HiQual UK.

3. Definitions

Malpractice means any act, omission, practice or behaviour that may compromise, or attempt to compromise, the integrity, validity, reliability, security or fairness of an assessment, qualification or certification process.

Maladministration means an act, omission, error, procedural failure or poor administration that may adversely affect learners, assessment processes, qualification integrity, certification or the effective operation of HiQual UK requirements.

Suspected malpractice or maladministration means a concern for which there is sufficient information to warrant consideration or investigation but which has not yet been established as proven.

Investigation means a structured examination of available evidence to establish facts, determine whether a breach occurred and identify appropriate action.

4. Policy Principles

HiQual UK will manage malpractice and maladministration according to the following principles:

4.1 Fairness and Natural Justice

Persons subject to an allegation will be given a fair opportunity to understand the concern and respond to relevant allegations before a final decision is made, except where immediate protective action is necessary.

4.2 Impartiality

Investigations and decisions will be conducted objectively. Persons with a conflict of interest will not participate where their involvement could compromise impartiality.

4.3 Confidentiality

Information will be shared only with persons who have a legitimate need to know, subject to applicable legal, safeguarding and reporting requirements.

4.4 Evidence-Based Decisions

Findings will be based on relevant and reliable evidence. HiQual UK will avoid making conclusions solely on assumption, speculation or unsupported allegation.

4.5 Proportionality

Actions and sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness, impact, intent, recurrence and circumstances of the matter.

4.6 Learner Protection

Where an incident may affect learners or assessment outcomes, HiQual UK will take reasonable steps to protect affected learners and preserve the integrity of their results.

4.7 Timeliness

Concerns will be addressed without unreasonable delay, while allowing sufficient time for appropriate investigation and fair consideration of evidence.

5. Examples of Malpractice

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

5.1 Learner Malpractice

Cheating or attempting to obtain an unfair advantage in an assessment.

Unauthorised access to assessment materials or information.

Plagiarism, collusion or submission of work that is not the learner's own where prohibited.

Fabrication or falsification of evidence, records, results or assessment work.

Impersonation or arranging for another person to complete an assessment.

Use of unauthorised materials, devices or assistance.

Unauthorised disclosure, copying or distribution of confidential assessment content.

Submission of fraudulent evidence or identity information.

5.2 Centre or Personnel Malpractice

Assisting a learner to obtain an unfair assessment advantage.

Unauthorised alteration of assessment evidence, marks or records.

Falsification of learner, assessment, attendance, quality assurance or certification records.

Improper disclosure of assessment materials.

Failure to follow required assessment security arrangements.

Improper influence over assessment or quality assurance decisions.

Certification fraud or knowingly supporting the issue of a certificate where requirements have not been met.

Concealing known malpractice or material assessment irregularities.

6. Examples of Maladministration

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

6.1 Administrative or Process Failures

Incorrect or incomplete learner records.

Failure to follow approved assessment or quality assurance procedures.

Incorrect registration, assessment, results or certification administration.

Failure to retain required records or evidence.

Unreasonable delays in processing learner or centre matters.

Incorrect communication of assessment or qualification requirements.

Failure to implement required reasonable adjustments or special consideration arrangements where applicable.

Repeated procedural failures indicating inadequate centre or organisational controls.

7. Prevention

HiQual UK will seek to prevent malpractice and maladministration through appropriate controls, including:

7.1 Preventive Controls

Clear qualification, assessment and centre requirements.

Assessment security and confidentiality controls.

Appropriate assessment and quality assurance training.

Standardisation and communication of assessment requirements.

Risk-based centre monitoring.

Secure record and certification controls.

Conflict-of-interest management.

Clear reporting and escalation arrangements.

Regular review of incidents and quality trends.

8. Reporting Concerns

Any person who has a reasonable concern about suspected malpractice or maladministration should report it through the appropriate HiQual UK or centre reporting route.

Reports should provide as much relevant information and evidence as reasonably available, including the nature of the concern, persons or activities involved, dates, qualification or assessment affected and supporting documentation.

Reports made in good faith will be treated seriously and handled confidentially to the extent reasonably practicable.

9. Initial Risk Assessment

On receipt of a concern, HiQual UK or an authorised centre representative will conduct an initial assessment to determine whether the matter should be investigated and whether immediate protective action is required.

The initial assessment may consider:

9.1 Initial Assessment Factors

Potential impact on learners.

Potential impact on assessment or qualification integrity.

Nature and seriousness of the allegation.

Available evidence.

Whether assessment materials or records may be at risk.

Whether results or certificates may be affected.

Whether the concern indicates a wider or systemic issue.

Whether another policy, authority or external body should be notified.

10. Immediate Protective Action

Where necessary, HiQual UK may take proportionate interim measures while an investigation is pending.

Measures may include securing assessment materials or records, restricting access, increasing monitoring, pausing relevant assessment or certification activity, requiring preservation of evidence, or temporarily restricting an individual's or centre's role.

Interim action is not, by itself, a finding of malpractice or maladministration.

11. Investigation

Where an investigation is required, HiQual UK will appoint an appropriately competent person or panel to investigate the matter.

The investigator will establish the relevant facts, identify and preserve evidence, consider the response of persons concerned and document the investigation process.

Investigators must act impartially and declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

11.1 Investigation Evidence

Evidence may include assessment materials, learner work, marking and quality assurance records, correspondence, system records, attendance information, witness statements, centre records, interviews, audit trails and other relevant information.

Evidence should be assessed for relevance, reliability, authenticity and consistency.

11.2 Interviews and Responses

Where appropriate, persons involved will be given an opportunity to provide an explanation or relevant evidence.

Interviews may be conducted remotely or in person and should be documented sufficiently to support the investigation record.

12. Investigation Outcomes

At the conclusion of an investigation, the investigator or authorised decision-maker will determine the outcome based on the available evidence.

Possible findings may include:

12.1 Finding Categories

No case to answer / allegation not substantiated.

Concern identified but no breach established.

Maladministration established.

Malpractice established.

Insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, with further action or monitoring where appropriate.

Where the evidence identifies a wider systemic weakness, a separate quality improvement or corrective action process may also be initiated.

13. Sanctions and Corrective Action

Where malpractice or maladministration is established, HiQual UK may apply proportionate sanctions or corrective measures.

Possible actions include:

13.1 Learner Actions

Written warning or formal notification.

Requirement to complete further assessment or evidence where permitted.

Invalidation of affected assessment evidence or result.

Withdrawal or withholding of a result or certificate where justified.

Restriction from a relevant assessment opportunity for a defined period where permitted.

Referral for further disciplinary or legal action where appropriate.

13.2 Centre or Personnel Actions

Action plan and enhanced monitoring.

Additional training or standardisation.

Requirement for additional quality assurance checks.

Restriction or suspension of relevant assessment activity.

Suspension or withdrawal of centre approval where justified under applicable procedures.

Removal or restriction of an individual's assessment or quality assurance responsibilities.

Withdrawal, correction or withholding of affected certificates or results where justified.

Referral to senior governance or other competent authority.

14. Aggravating and Mitigating Factors

When determining an appropriate outcome, HiQual UK may consider:

14.1 Aggravating Factors

Deliberate or organised behaviour.

Repeated or persistent breaches.

Attempts to conceal or destroy evidence.

Impact on multiple learners or qualifications.

Financial or other improper benefit.

Failure to cooperate with an investigation.

Previous relevant findings.

14.2 Mitigating Factors

Accidental or isolated error.

Prompt self-reporting.

Cooperation with the investigation.

Effective corrective action already taken.

Evidence of misunderstanding where appropriate.

Other relevant circumstances supported by evidence.

15. Results and Certificates

Where malpractice or maladministration may affect assessment results or certification, HiQual UK may withhold, amend, invalidate, withdraw or otherwise review affected results or certificates in accordance with applicable procedures.

Where a certificate has been issued incorrectly or fraudulently, HiQual UK may take appropriate action to correct the record and protect the integrity of its certification system.

16. Appeals

Where a decision is eligible for appeal, the affected person or organisation will be provided with access to the applicable HiQual UK appeals process.

The appeals process should provide an appropriate opportunity to challenge a decision on permitted grounds and should be managed by a person or panel with appropriate independence from the original decision.

This policy should be read alongside the HiQual UK Appeals Policy.

17. Complaints and Whistleblowing

Concerns about the way HiQual UK has administered an investigation may be raised through the applicable Complaints Policy where appropriate.

Reports of serious wrongdoing, concealment or organisational concerns may also be raised through the Whistleblowing Policy where applicable.

A complaint or whistleblowing report does not replace the need to preserve evidence or manage immediate assessment risks.

18. Centre Responsibilities

Approved centres must maintain suitable arrangements for preventing, identifying and reporting malpractice and maladministration.

Centres must:

18.1 Centre Requirements

Maintain appropriate assessment security and record controls.

Inform learners and relevant personnel of applicable assessment integrity requirements.

Investigate centre-level concerns where authorised to do so and escalate matters that fall within HiQual UK's remit.

Preserve relevant evidence.

Cooperate fully with HiQual UK investigations.

Implement required corrective action.

Prevent retaliation against persons who report concerns in good faith.

Notify HiQual UK promptly of serious or potentially systemic incidents.

19. HiQual UK Responsibilities

HiQual UK will maintain appropriate oversight of malpractice and maladministration matters.

HiQual UK will provide clear reporting routes, investigate matters within its remit, maintain appropriate records, monitor trends and escalate significant risks to the Academic and Standards Committee or other appropriate authority.

HiQual UK will seek consistency in the application of this policy while considering the circumstances and evidence of each individual case.

20. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Information relating to allegations and investigations will be handled securely and in accordance with applicable data protection and confidentiality requirements.

Investigation records will be retained only for as long as required by applicable requirements and HiQual UK's records retention arrangements.

Information may be disclosed where required for safeguarding, legal, regulatory, governance or other legitimate purposes.

21. Record Keeping

HiQual UK will maintain appropriate records of malpractice and maladministration matters, including where relevant:

21.1 Investigation Records

Initial report or allegation.

Risk assessment and interim actions.

Investigation plan and evidence considered.

Statements or interview records.

Investigation findings and rationale.

Decision and sanctions or corrective action.

Appeal information and outcome where applicable.

Evidence of action completion and closure.

Relevant governance reporting.

22. Monitoring and Trend Analysis

HiQual UK will monitor malpractice and maladministration data to identify recurring issues, systemic risks, centre trends, qualification risks and opportunities for preventive action.

Trend analysis may inform qualification review, assessment security, centre monitoring, training, policy changes and governance decisions.

23. Serious or Systemic Incidents

Where an incident may materially affect a qualification, multiple learners, assessment integrity, certification or the credibility of HiQual UK, the matter will be escalated promptly.

HiQual UK may establish an incident management group or refer the matter to the appropriate governance authority.

Where an external notification is legally or otherwise appropriately required, HiQual UK will make or support that notification through the appropriate route.

24. Conflicts of Interest

Anyone involved in reporting, investigating or deciding a malpractice or maladministration matter must declare actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

A conflicted person must not participate where their involvement could reasonably compromise impartiality.

25. Policy Exceptions

Any exception to this policy must be justified, documented and approved by an appropriately authorised person or governance body.

No exception may be used to conceal malpractice, compromise learner protection, undermine assessment integrity or avoid appropriate investigation.

26. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where required by changes in applicable requirements, qualification arrangements, assessment systems, organisational risks, investigation findings or lessons learned.

The Policy Owner will recommend amendments to the appropriate governance authority for approval.

27. Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read alongside:

- Academic Governance Policy
- Quality Assurance Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Appeals Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Centre Recognition Policy
- Centre Monitoring Policy
- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy
- Certification Policy
- Assessment Security and Confidentiality Policy
- Learner Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Records Management and Retention Policy
- Risk Management Policy

28. Document Control

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29. Version Control

Version	Date	Description of Change	Author	Approval
1.0	1 June 2026	Initial publication of HiQual UK Malpractice and Maladministration Policy	Sarah Williams, Head of Quality Assurance	Academic and Standards Committee

30. Policy Statement

HiQual UK has zero tolerance for malpractice and maladministration that compromises or may compromise the integrity of its qualifications, assessments or certification.

All concerns will be considered fairly, impartially, confidentially and proportionately, with appropriate evidence-based investigation and corrective action.

HiQual UK will use findings and trends from malpractice and maladministration cases to strengthen assessment security, quality assurance, centre oversight, staff competence and continual improvement.

END OF POLICY