

# COAST AND FOREST EDUCATION

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## Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

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### Purpose

It is the intention of Coast and Forest Education to work closely with our learners, tutors, assessors and quality assurers to ensure that:

- Any potential malpractice or maladministration is identified promptly
- All allegations of malpractice are investigated methodically and equitably in line with Awarding organisation requirements
- If malpractice or maladministration is proven, it is promptly corrected or the effects on users of qualifications mitigated in order to uphold the validity of qualifications issued by the awarding organisation
- Procedures are kept under review to ensure cases of malpractice are prevented wherever possible

### Definition of Malpractice

Malpractice is defined as any deliberate activity, neglect, default or other practice that compromises the integrity of the internal or external assessment process and/or validity of achievement and certification of a qualification awarded by the awarding organisation. It covers the deliberate actions, neglect, default or other practice that may compromise the following:

- The assessment processes
- Integrity of a regulated qualification
- The validity of results or a certificate
- The reputation and credibility of regulated qualifications or of the wider qualifications community

### Examples of malpractice could include, but are not limited to:

Listed below are examples of centre and learner malpractice. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and is only intended as guidance on our definition of malpractice:

- Plagiarism: taking or copying someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own
- Collusion, or permitting collusion: co-operation with another learner, tutor, assessor or quality assurer for a dishonest purpose, for example when completing assessment tasks
- Impersonating another learner or providing forged identification documentation
- Submission of false information, including authenticity statements
- Deliberate failure to carry out delivery, assessment and quality assurance in accordance with the awarding organisations requirements
- Deliberate failure to adhere to learner registration and certification procedures
- Deliberate failure to adhere to the conditions of appointment document
- Deliberate failure to adhere to record keeping requirements
- Fraudulent certificate claims
- Persistent instances of maladministration
- Unauthorised use of equipment and materials in assessments

- Intentionally withholding information from the awarding organisation
- A loss, theft of, or breach of confidential assessment materials
- Defacing, amending or falsifying assessment records
- Deliberate failure to adhere to reasonable adjustment, or inappropriately assisting a learner.

### **Definition of Maladministration**

Maladministration is defined as any activity, neglect, default or other practice that results in the centre, tutor, assessor, learner or quality assurer not complying with awarding organisation requirements, tutor agreement, the general conditions of recognition, or regulatory principles.

Maladministration is in effect any activity or practice which results to non-compliance with administrative requirements and regulations, this includes the application of persistent mistakes or poor administration within the centre including inappropriate learner records.

### **Examples of maladministration could include, but are not limited to:**

Listed below are examples of centre and learner maladministration. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and is only intended as guidance on our definition of maladministration:

- Persistent failure to adhere to our certification procedures
- Inaccurate certificate claims
- Persistent failure to adhere to our approved training centre recognition and/or qualification requirements and/or associated actions assigned to that centre
- Failure to keep auditable records in accordance to awarding organisation requirements
- Failure to adhere to delivery, assessment and certification requirements
- Failure to adhere to register learners in accordance with Awarding organisation procedures
- Unreasonable delays in responding to requests and/or communications from Awarding organisation
- A deliberate act or omission of withholding or delaying information which is required to assure Awarding organisation of the centres ability to deliver and assess qualifications appropriately
- Misuse of Awarding organisation logo or misrepresentation of a centre relationship with Awarding organisation qualifications and/or its recognition and approval status with us

## **Policy**

### **Centre responsibility**

Coast and Forest Education are responsible for ensuring they have established, maintaining and are compliant with up to date policies and procedures for the investigation of suspected or alleged malpractice and maladministration.

Reasonable actions must have been taken to prevent instances of malpractice and maladministration, all staff, tutors, assessors, learners or quality assurers must be made aware of this policies contents and the procedures relating to this topic.

Centre compliance with this policy and how they take reasonable actions to prevent and/or investigate instances of malpractice and maladministration, will be monitored through external quality assurance procedures.

Failure to co-operate may lead to certificates not being issued to learners and future course registrations not being accepted.

A failure to comply and to report any suspected or actual malpractice and maladministration cases or have in place effective arrangements to prevent such cases may lead to sanctions being imposed on the centre.

### **Reporting suspected instances of malpractice or maladministration procedures**

If malpractice or maladministration is suspected or there has been an actual case, the awarding organisation must be informed immediately, utilising the form that is available from Awarding organisation website and submitting all relevant evidence to support the case.

Reports can be made by centre personnel, tutors, assessors, learners or quality assurers. The approved training centre must also be notified of any suspicion of malpractice and maladministration, so they can apply their own procedures where appropriate.

Awarding organisation will investigate all cases of malpractice and maladministration on a case by case basis relating to all the information and evidence we receive. Any suspected or actual cases of malpractice will be reported to the relevant regulatory authorities in line with the regulatory requirements and indicate the proposed actions/sanctions and an estimated timescale for the investigation.

Awarding organisation will notify the relevant regulatory authority of the outcomes and will co-operate with any follow up investigations required by them and we will agree on appropriate remedial action if there is evidence that certificates may be invalid.

The fundamental principle of all investigations is for them to be conducted in a fair, reasonable, proportionate and lawful manner and all evidence is considered impartially. Investigations will be based on the following objectives:

- Establish the facts relating to the allegations in order to determine whether any irregularities have occurred
- Identify the cause of any irregularities
- Identify the people involved in the allegations and/or may be able to provide relevant information/evidence
- Establish the level of risk involved within the irregularities
- Evaluate any actions/sanctions already taken by the approved training centre
- Determine whether remedial action is required to reduce the risk to current registered learners, to preserve the integrity of the qualification and to prevent or mitigate against adverse effect resulting from any malpractice or maladministration
- Ascertain if any action is required in respect of certificates already issued to learners
- Obtain clear evidence to support the sanctions to be applied to the centre and/or to personnel in accordance with the sanctions policy
- Identify any adverse patterns or trends

The investigation may involve us requesting further information from relevant parties and/or interviews with personnel involved in the case. An important element of a fair procedure is that any person who has an adverse allegation made against them, is provided with a description of the allegations made against them and the possible consequences of a finding. They are given the opportunity to respond to the allegations.

At any time during a suspected or actual case of malpractice and maladministration, Awarding organisation reserves the right to impose sanctions on the centre in accordance with the sanctions

policy in order to protect the interests of learners, the integrity of the qualifications and/or public confidence in the qualifications.

We also reserve the right to withhold a learner's or full cohort's results for the qualifications they are studying at the time of the reported case or investigation of suspected or actual malpractice/maladministration.

If we find the complexity of a case or the lack of co-operation from a centre which prevents Awarding organisation from conducting a thorough investigation, if it is appropriate in such circumstances we will consult with the relevant regulatory authority in order to determine the best way to progress and conclude the case.

### **Responsibility for the investigation**

In accordance with regulatory requirements all concerns, or suspected cases of malpractice and maladministration will be reviewed promptly by Awarding organisation to establish if any form of malpractice or maladministration has occurred, we will take all reasonable steps to prevent any adverse effect from occurring as defined by our regulators.

All suspected cases of malpractice and maladministration will be forwarded to Awarding organisation compliance manager and we will send you an acknowledgement of receipt within 7 working days. Awarding organisation compliance manager will be responsible for ensuring the investigation is carried out in a prompt and effective manner and in accordance with this policy, they will allocate the relevant manager to conduct the investigation to establish whether or not the malpractice or maladministration has occurred and will review any supporting evidence received or gathered by Awarding organisation.

We will ensure that the personnel assigned to the investigation have had the appropriate level of training, are competent and have had no previous involvement or personal interest in the matter.

### **Notifying relevant parties**

Awarding organisation will tell the person who made the allegation who will be handling the matter, how they can contact them and any further assistance we may need from them. We will keep them updated as to how the allegation has progressed and if an investigation has commenced, timeframes may depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we will not disclose any details of the investigation activities and it may not be appropriate to disclose any details of the outcomes due to confidentiality or legal reasons.

In all cases of suspected or actual malpractice or maladministration at a centre, we will notify the head of the centre involved in the allegation (unless they are under investigation in which case communication may be with the next appropriate person of authority) that we are investigating the matter.

In cases of learner malpractice, we may ask the centre to investigate the issue whilst liaising with personnel at Awarding organisation. We will only ask the centre to investigate the matter when we have confidence that the investigation would be prompt, thorough, fair, independent and effective. We may communicate directly with centre personnel who have been accused of malpractice if appropriate and/or communicate directly with a learner or their representative if deemed necessary when reviewing the evidence.

Where applicable Awarding organisation compliance manager will inform the appropriate regulatory authority of a suspected case or a proven case of malpractice and/or maladministration, which may

invalidate the award of a qualification or if it could affect another awarding organisation. We will also keep them informed if we are investigating a large or complex case.

### **Investigation timelines and summary process**

Once Awarding organisation have received an allegation of malpractice or maladministration you will be sent an acknowledgement of receipt within 7 working days. The allegation will be reviewed in line with our policies and procedures and an investigation will be conducted where necessary. To ensure a fair and thorough process is followed the duration of the investigation will depend on the nature and severity of the allegation we receive at this stage, or the complexity of the response required.

We do aim to provide this as soon as the outcome is available or within a maximum of 28 days, in some cases this may take longer to conclude the investigation with an outcome, in these instances the person reporting the allegation will be notified of revised timescales.

The essential principals of all investigations are to conduct them in a fair, reasonable, efficient and legal manner, whilst ensuring all the relevant evidence is considered without bias. Investigations may be underpinned by terms of reference and may be based around the following objectives:

- Establish the facts relating to the allegation in order to determine whether any irregularities have occurred
- To identify the cause of the irregularities and those who are involved
- To identify the scale of the irregularities and whether other qualifications may be affected
- Review and evaluate any action already taken by the centre
- Identify any adverse patterns or trends
- Determine whether remedial action may be required to reduce the risk to current registered learners and to preserve the integrity of the qualification
- To ascertain if any action is required in respect of any certificates already issued to learners
- To obtain clear and precise evidence to support any sanctions that are to be applied to a centre and/or to the personnel in accordance with Awarding organisation sanction policy

When carrying out an investigation Awarding organisation will be sensitive to the effect on the reputation of an approved training centre or to the personnel who may be subject to investigation. They aim to ensure that the investigation is carried out as confidentially as possible, the organisation/personnel who is subject of the allegation will have an opportunity to raise any issues about the proposed approach and the conduct of the investigation to the investigator.

During an investigation, they may request further information from relevant parties and/or interviews with personnel involved in the matter. If any interviews are carried out with the person(s) accused of malpractice or maladministration they can be accompanied by a work colleague or other party.

In addition to the above they will:

- Ensure all evidence collected as part of an investigation is kept secure. All original documentation and records relating to a completed investigation that lead to a sanction against a centre/ will be retained securely for five years. If an investigation leads to invalidation of certificates, criminal or civil prosecution all original documentation and records relating to the case will be retained until the case and any appeals have been heard and for five years thereafter
- They expect all parties who are either directly or indirectly involved in the investigation to fully co-operate with them.

When a concern or an actual allegation of malpractice or maladministration and/or at any time throughout the investigation, they reserve the right to impose sanctions on the approved training centre in accordance with their sanctions policy to protect the interests of learners and the integrity of

the qualifications. The quality assurance manager will be responsible for regularly reviewing the application and maintenance of sanctions to ensure they are still appropriate and proportionate to the incident(s) and to highlight the possible risk of future incidents occurring.

Awarding organisation reserve the right to also withhold a learner and/or cohort's results for all qualifications they are studying at the time of the allegation/investigation.

In some cases, they may find that they are unable to complete an investigation due to a lack of co-operation from a centre or due to the complexity of the case. In these situations, they will consult with the relevant regulatory authority in order to determine the next course of action to progress with the matter.

If a team member at Coast and Forest Education is under investigation they may suspend them or move them to other duties until the investigation is complete.

### **Investigation report**

If they believe there is sufficient evidence of malpractice or maladministration to implicate an individual/centre they will:

- Inform us, preferably in writing of the allegation
- Inform us of the evidence found supporting the judgment
- Inform us that we may or have shared information with the relevant regulators and other relevant bodies relating to the allegation and investigation
- Give us an opportunity to consider and respond to the allegation and our findings
- Inform them of our appeals policy if they wish to appeal against our decision
- Apply sanctions if appropriate

After an investigation is complete they will produce a draft report for all parties concerned to check the factual accuracy. Any further amendments will be agreed between all parties concerned and ourselves prior to the final document being produced. The report will include the following:

- Identify where the breach occurred, if any
- Confirm the facts of the case including any relevant mitigating factors
- Identify who is responsible for the breach if any occurred
- Contain all supporting evidence where appropriate, including written statements
- Confirm an appropriate level or remedial action to be applied

The final report will be available to the regulatory authorities and other external agencies where appropriate. If an independent/third party reported the suspected or actual case of malpractice or maladministration we may also inform them of the outcome, normally within 7 working days of the final decision. When doing so we may withhold some details, if to disclose such information would breach a duty of confidentiality or legal duty.

### **Investigation outcomes**

If an investigation confirms that malpractice or maladministration has taken place, they will consider the following action to take:

- To minimise the risk to the integrity of certification now and in the future
- Maintain public confidence in the qualifications
- Discourage others from carrying out similar instances of malpractice or maladministration

- Ensure there is no gain from compromising our standards

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy and its procedures will be reviewed regularly for improvements as part of our Quality Assurance requirements. This will ensure it is fit for purpose, reflects the services we deliver to our customers and we provide services which are relevant to the requirements of individual needs.

### **Contact Details**

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