



MALPRACTICE AND MALADMINISTRATION POLICY (External)

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Aim

- To identify and minimise the risk of malpractice by apprentices training providers or employers
- To respond to any incident of alleged malpractice promptly and objectively
- To standardise and record any investigation of malpractice to ensure openness and fairness
- To impose appropriate penalties and/or sanctions on apprentices or staff/assessors where incidents (or attempted incidents) of malpractice are proven
- To protect the integrity of this EPAO and of end point assessments across the sector.

Scope

This policy is aimed at apprentices, employers, and training providers. EPAOs are required to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of malpractice and maladministration. This policy applies to each process associated with end-point assessments: registrations, gateway, assessment planning, assessment delivery, results and post-results processes. It is important that all stakeholders comply with this policy as part of end-point assessment service delivered by MA, as malpractice and maladministration by any of our stakeholders could result in the termination of our contract with the training provider.

EPAO's Responsibility

All stakeholders involved in end point assessments conducted by MA should be made fully aware of the contents of the policy and that arrangements are in place to prevent and investigate instances of suspected malpractice and maladministration. A failure to report suspected or actual malpractice/maladministration cases including plagiarism, cheating and collusion or have in place effective arrangements to prevent such cases, may lead to sanctions being imposed on the organisation.

Should an investigation be undertaken, the Compliance Director will:

- Ensure the investigation is carried out promptly by competent investigators who have no personal involvement in the incident or personal interest in the matter.
- Ensure the investigation is carried out in an effective, prompt and thorough manner and that the investigator(s) look beyond the immediate reported issue to ensure that arrangements are appropriate for all Standards.
- Respond timely and openly to all requests relating to the allegation and / or investigation.
- Co-operate and ensure that individuals co-operate fully with any investigation and / or request for information.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with:

- **Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance policies and procedures**
- **Ofqual guidance on malpractice and maladministration**
- **Appeals**
- **Complaints**
- **Conflict of Interest**
- **Reasonable Adjustments**
- **Sanctions**

Definition of Malpractice

Malpractice is essentially any activity or practice, which deliberately contravenes regulations and compromises the integrity of the internal or external assessment process and / or the validity of grades and certificates. It covers any deliberate actions, neglect, default or other practice that compromises, or could compromise:

- The assessment process
- The integrity of a regulated apprenticeship Standard
- The validity of a result or certificate
- The reputation and credibility of Marshall Assessment.

Malpractice may also include a range of issues from the failure to maintain appropriate records of systems, to the deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates. For the purpose of this policy this term also covers misconduct and forms of unnecessary discrimination or bias towards certain groups of students.

Definition of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work, words, images, ideas, opinions or discoveries, whether published or not, as one's own, or alternatively taking for one's own use, the artwork, images or computer-generated work of others without properly acknowledging the source, with or without the owner's permission. Plagiarism by students can occur in examinations, but is most likely to occur outside sat, unseen exams, i.e. in coursework, assignments, portfolios, essays and dissertations.

Definition of Cheating

The term cheating includes, without limitation:

- Being in possession of notes, 'crib notes', or textbooks during an assessment other than where the rubric permits such usage
- Communicating during the 'exam' hurdle of the end point assessment with another apprentice
- Having prior access to the examination questions unless permitted to do so by the rubric of the assessment plan
- Substitution of assessment materials
- Unfair or unauthorised use of an electronic calculator/device
- Impersonation
- Use of a communication device during the assessment
- Any deliberate attempt to deceive.

Definition of Collusion

Collusion is an example of unfair means because, like plagiarism, it is an attempt to deceive the assessors by disguising the true authorship of an assessment, or part of an assessment.

Examples of Malpractice (External)

- 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 of evidence
- Impersonation by pretending to be someone else to produce the work for another or arranging for another to take one's place in an assessment/examination/test.
- Breaching EPA Requirements, these requirements could include apprentices completing or submitting work such as a project outside of the specified timescale as stated in the assessment plan
- Providers, employers, or apprentices intentionally providing inaccurate or misleading submissions of declaration forms and/or other evidence, within the Gateway process, or during the EPA.
- Providers or employers helping apprentices to answer assessment questions or producing assessment evidence, that undermines or prevents the EPA from determining the authenticity of the apprentice's evidence and contravenes the requirements of the specific assessment plan
- Any staff or apprentices undertaking the EPA on behalf of someone else.
- Submitting or plagiarising work that is not the apprentice's own original work (such as using a project writing service to buy work and submit it as their own).
- Deliberate destruction or tampering with work or assessment records.
- Giving a false declaration of authenticity of assessment evidence.
- Intentional falsification of requests for reasonable adjustments to assessments
- Deliberately giving false assessment evidence, records, results, and other documents relating to the EPA.
- Intentionally accessing or trying to access and share confidential assessment material.
- Apprentices offering a bribe of any type to invigilators, employer or provider staff or MA staff (independent end-point assessors or internal quality assurers)
- Use of unauthorised material or devices during the assessment.
- Breaching the invigilation conditions, including inappropriate behaviour, such as apprentices communicating with one another or failing to follow the instructions of the invigilator.

- Anyone failing to cooperate with an investigation or act as requested by MA
- Breach of assessment rules where Employer Registered Assessors or Technical Experts are involved in elements of EPA and their actions invalidate an assessment

External individuals involved in malpractice may be apprentices, employers, test invigilators, other third parties (e.g., friends, siblings or parents assisting with projects)

Marshall Assessment will seek to minimise the risk of employer assessor or technical experts' malpractice by ensuring that all participate in a comprehensive orientation programme upon nomination by the provider or employer.

Marshall Assessment will seek to avoid assessment malpractice, committed by an apprentice by:

- Using the Gateway period and the apprentice mock materials to inform learners of the policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice
- Asking apprentices to make declarations that their work is their own
- Asking apprentices to provide evidence that they have interpreted and synthesised appropriate information and acknowledged any sources used via referencing etc

Definition of Maladministration

Maladministration includes any actions, neglect, default, or other practice that compromises the assessment or quality assurance process, including the integrity of the EPA, the validity of any results or certificate requests or the reputation and credibility of MA

Examples of Maladministration

- Failure to adhere to the administration protocols regarding the conduct of assessments and examinations and/or the handling of information for end-point assessment that do adversely affect the assessment outcome or decision, but could cause issues such as data breaches, or delay the assessment or the issuing of results
- Failing to maintain and keep accurate records about apprentices Gateways
- Failure to provide accurate information on apprentices to MA, such as the correct Apprenticeship standard
- Inaccurate recording of apprentice's name or other vital information, resulting in delays with certification
- Incidents of not complying with EPA Invigilation requirements
- Failure to respond to information requests or addressing minor actions in line with service level contracts, enforceable agreements and any monitoring and review activities, as conducted by MA on third parties

- Failure to provide correct information for applications of reasonable adjustments, in isolated cases

Reporting Assessment Malpractice or Maladministration

Any individual who suspects malpractice or maladministration in any aspect of an assessment is required to inform the Compliance Director (conflicts of interest are declared before the investigation begins and if the compliance director is conflicted, they will be replaced by a non-conflicted member of the board) using the following email address: malpractice@marshall-assessment.com please state the source of malpractice in the subject area of your email. Please use **Apprentice Malpractice, Employer malpractice, Provider malpractice or EPA malpractice**. This process must be followed for any incident of reported, suspected or actual:

- Malpractice or attempted malpractice by employer and/or Provider staff
- Maladministration by employer and/or provider staff
- Malpractice or attempted malpractice by apprentices

Using the above email address, you can request a template to complete a record of the incident. If you choose not to use our template, your report should set out the details of the alleged malpractice and / or maladministration and be sufficiently detailed and include any evidence that supports, the allegation to enable an investigation to commence.

Allegations must include (where relevant):

- Names of those involved in the allegations (this may be the Employer, Apprentice or Provider details)
- Apprentice Name and Unique Learning Number (ULIN) (either/ or information)
- Apprenticeship standard
- Assessment methods impacted
- Dates and locations that suspected or actual malpractice and maladministration occurred
- A full written description of the events and circumstances of the suspected or actual malpractice and maladministration that has alleged to have occurred
- Witness statements from those involved/impacted
- Reporting persons contact details

All email correspondence will be securely stored in the MA Maladministration folder on an access restricted area of MA's SharePoint site. Data will be kept for 6 months after the investigation is complete and then digitally shredded.

Where requested, we will not disclose an informant's identity, unless legally obliged to do so. As our investigations are confidential, we will not be able to disclose to informant's details of the outcome of the investigation is or what action has been taken.

If a member of MA finds or suspects malpractice when conducting an EPA or during any quality control of quality assurance activity this will be referred to MA's assessment director who will then advise MA 's responsible officer or deputy responsible officer in order that the incident can be reported to our EQA.

NB: Our ability to investigate is dependent on the availability and quality of evidence. The ability to collect viable evidence diminishes over time, post alleged event. We therefore encourage anyone who suspects malpractice/ maladministration to notify us as soon as possible after the incident.

The Investigation

When MA receives information of an alleged or actual case of maladministration or malpractice an independent investigation will be launched. The investigation will be conducted by an independent third-party investigator.

When dealing with alleged malpractice / maladministration within a training provider or an employer we will communicate with named contacts provided on ACE 360 and the signatory on our service level agreement with the provider. If any of these named contacts are cited in the allegations, then alternative contacts will be sourced through HR channels at the relevant organisation.

During the investigation, MA may:

- Involve the apprentice in the investigation process
- Contact staff members and the apprentice (or a representative) directly

Pending the outcome of the investigation MA may also:

- Withhold assessment materials
- Request a pause on release of certificates
- Refuse EPA bookings

Other sources of allegations could be that MA suspects malpractice and maladministration from a stakeholder or third-party reports directly to us. In any case our compliance director is notified (unless they are cited or conflicted in the investigation- in this case another board member will be allocated), and a third -party investigating officer is nominated (that has the appropriate level of skills and is not cited in the allegation). A report will be produced by the investigating officer. Such a report will require an appropriate investigation and will need the support of the organisation cited. The named head of centre (provider) or line manager (employer) and as well as any persons linked to the investigation should be available to provide information.

If MA is made aware of an alleged incident of malpractice or maladministration following certification, then again, a full investigation will be triggered. Depending on the results of the investigation certificates may be recalled by the apprenticeship service and declared invalid. Our regulator may require MA to report the case and the actions we are taking to safeguard the reputation of independent EPA to other EPAO's who provide EPA services for the same standards.

Following an investigation MA will produce a report of the alleged events and all concerned parties can check this for factual accuracy. Any amendments will be agreed between all parties involved and the compliance director.

A malpractice review committee will be set up (consisting of a MA board member a subcommittee member and the independent investigating officer) to review and sign off the report. Unless advised otherwise, the report will be sent via email to provided email addresses. Marshall Assessments responsible officer and or deputy responsible officer will be appraised of the investigation and the committees ruling and will advise the EQA accordingly. The Compliance Director will advise all parties of the decision by sending out the full report with details of decisions and any sanctions to be applied as recommended by the committee. No one from the review committee can be cited in any part of the original allegation.

If malpractice or maladministration is established MA will consider whether the integrity of our EPA assessments are at risk if the provider, employer, or apprentice in question were to be involved in future MA EPA. If the integrity of our EPA service is at risk MA may take the following action*:

Disqualifying the apprentice from taking any component of the EPA

Refusing to issue EPA results

Barring an employer of staff member from involvement in any aspects of delivery of our EPA

Removing Employer assessors / technical experts from our approved register

Non acceptance of EPA bookings from a provider in cases where malpractice is established for specific standards

Termination of the EPA service agreement

Invalidating claims for an apprenticeship completion certificate

***This list is not exhaustive these are examples and appropriate actions will be fully considered by the committee**

Notification of EQA and ESFA

MA will notify the relevant regulatory body of any allegations of malpractice where it deems the situation may give rise to an adverse effect. The responsible officer / deputy responsible officer will provide the EQA with the outcome of any malpractice maladministration investigation in the form of the final written report following review by committee.

Grounds for Appeal against the outcome of an assessment malpractice investigation

Appeals must be based on reasonable grounds which relate to the incident in question and the following are accepted as reasonable grounds:

- The incident was not dealt with in accordance with the Malpractice and Maladministration policy.
- The decision was unreasonable in light of the evidence presented to the Investigating Officer. Further evidence (including medical evidence) has come to light which could change the basis of the investigation outcome.
- The sanction imposed is disproportionate to the seriousness of the malpractice in line with internal policy and policy related to the relevant awarding organisation.
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Please refer to Marshall assessments Appeals policy for further detail

Appendix 1: Stages involved in the investigation process

Notification

The regulatory conditions require MA to arrange an investigation where MA suspects, its alleged by another person/ organisation and there are reasonable grounds for that allegation.

MA will appoint an investigator that is independent from the any involvement in the alleged malpractice event

Terms of reference for the investigation will be set by the nominated investigator and confirmed by the compliance director.

The compliance director will provide secure storage will ensure that there is secure storage arrangements for all materials associated with the investigation

MA will monitor the progress of the investigation and ensure all parties are informed of progress (where possible)

MA will advise the relevant regulators of any activity that could cause or has caused an adverse effect and is in breach of regulatory conditions. The responsible or deputy responsible officer will report such an event through the required communication channels

Interviews

Investigations will normally include interviews. Interviewee's will be informed that they may have another individual of their choosing present. All parties should introduce themselves. All interviews should be conducted in private locations free where all parties will be free from distraction.

Interviewer should explain the reason for the interview and let the interviewee know that the interview will be recorded and how and where any evidence will be stored. The interviewer must confirm the date and time The investigating officer will also take accurate notes of the recorded interview. If its not possible to conduct a face-to-face interview online software should be used.

Gathering Evidence

The investigator should review relevant evidence in conjunction with the investigation (e.g., quality assurance documents associated with the apprenticeship standard). Issues to be determined:

What occurred (nature of malpractice/substance of the allegations)

Why the incident occurred

Who was involved in the incident?

When it occurred

Where it occurred – there may be more than one location

What action, if any, has been taken

The Committee

The committee will review all the evidence provided and make a decision regarding investigation outcomes. The committee consist of one board member (normally the Compliance Director) and member of the subcommittee (normally the assessment quality manager) and the third-party investigating officer. The independent investigator will be available to MA for 3 investigations. After this number of investigations, the named independent investigator will be replaced.

Reporting

The final outcomes will be submitted to the relevant parties in a report, to include any sanctions and actions required. The relevant regulatory bodies will be notified.