Rewarding Learning

Preventing Malpractice in **Examinations and Assessments**

Guidance for Parents/Guardians

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1 Introduction

This document provides guidance for parents or guardians whose children are taking CCEA qualifications. It will support you in preventing your son/daughter/ward from committing malpractice.

You should read this along with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) **Information for candidates documents**; these are available at **www.jcq.org.uk** and provided to all candidates by their school/college prior to assessments and exams taking place. You can also read the JCQ **Suspected malpractice: policies and procedures**.

2 What is candidate malpractice?

JCQ define malpractice as any act, default or practice which is:

- a breach of the Regulations; and/or
- a breach of CCEA requirements regarding how a qualification should be delivered; and/or
- a failure to follow established procedures in relation to a qualification; which:
  - gives rise to prejudice to candidates; and/or
  - compromises public confidence in qualifications; and/or
  - compromises, attempts to compromise or may compromise the process of assessment, the integrity of any qualification or the validity of a result or certificate; and/or
  - damages the authority, reputation or credibility of any awarding body or school or officer, employee or agent of any awarding body or school.

Candidate malpractice therefore is any action that a candidate could take that could call into question the integrity or authenticity of their exam or assessment or that may mean the outcome of the assessment is not a true reflection of their individual ability and efforts.

Malpractice can happen during any exam or assessment. This includes while candidates are:

- preparing and authenticating controlled assessment or coursework;
- carrying out practical assessment work;
- compiling portfolios of assessment evidence; or
- completing their exams.

All allegations of malpractice and suspected malpractice must be reported to CCEA and investigated by the school/college to ensure the integrity and authenticity of the assessment and fairness to all candidates. Failure by the school/college to investigate as required by JCQ and CCEA also constitutes malpractice.

Malpractice can be reported to CCEA by the school/college a candidate attends, another school/college, those marking assessments/exams, other students or members of the public. CCEA also monitors social media to check that information candidates share does not break the rules.

3 How can I help my son/daughter/ward avoid malpractice?

Committing malpractice can have very serious consequences for the outcome of your son/daughter/ward's qualification. They could lose all marks in an assessment unit or be disqualified from a qualification.

Make sure he/she:

- has read and fully understood all the information in the JCQ **Information for Candidates** documents provided by the school/college. If you have any queries, contact your son/daughter/ward's teacher or school/college.
- understands that malpractice can have very serious consequences, including possible disqualification from their assessment.
- knows that mobile phone or any unauthorised items must not be taken into the exam room in any circumstances. If there is a family emergency, the school/college should be made aware of this so any urgent communications can be managed appropriately. Being found with a phone or other unauthorised item in an exam room, even if it is switched off, has serious consequences and can include disqualification from an exam/assessment.
- arrives in good time for an exam. Late arrival can result in unauthorised materials being taken into an exam room by mistake and could result in a penalty being applied.
- knows not to include any inappropriate or offensive material in any work that they submit.
- knows that coursework, controlled assessment and portfolio work must all be a candidate's own work. Teachers and assessors can easily detect changes in style, language and grammar.
- fully understands what plagiarism is and knows they cannot present work from sources such as the internet, artificial intelligence, books and magazines as their own. Where they use information from other sources, they must reference all this source material as required by JCQ and the subject guidance. Awarding bodies have anti-plagiarism software which checks the authenticity of candidate work submitted.
- does not copy work from other candidates or allow their work to be copied. Both allowing work to be copied and lending work without knowing it would be copied are malpractice. Penalties will be applied if this happens.
- knows they cannot pretend to be someone else or arrange for another person to take their place in an examination or an assessment.
- understands the risk of discussing exam or assessment-related information on social media. CCEA investigate all inappropriate exam or assessment information found or reported.
- understands how to behave appropriately during an exam. Inappropriate or disruptive behaviour can result in losing marks or being disqualified from a qualification.
- does not facilitate malpractice on the part of other candidates.
- does not behave in a manner so as to undermine the integrity of the examination.

4 What should I look out for?

4.1 Unauthorised items in the exam room

Candidates must not bring an iPod, a mobile phone, AirPods, earphones, an MP3/4 player or similar devices, watches, smart glasses and any other smart devices into the assessment/exam room. If a candidate is found to have a mobile phone or similar electronic device in their possession, even if it is not used or is switched off, they will lose all marks for that unit. If caught using the item, they will be disqualified from the unit. This means they cannot get a grade for that subject.

As your son/daughter/ward should not have a phone during the exam or assessment, you should not try to contact their mobile phone during this time. For urgent issues contact the school/college office and they will manage any communication on your behalf.

To find out more, see the JCQ **Unauthorised items poster.**

4.2 Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves taking someone else's words, thoughts or ideas and presenting them as your own. As well as copying from published texts in print or on the internet, plagiarism can also refer to essays, pieces of work or artefacts previously submitted for assessment by others. Memorising the content of a text and reproducing this is also plagiarism. It is a form of cheating which is taken very seriously.

Teachers and assessors look out for plagiarism in:

- coursework;
- controlled assessments;
- the presentation of any practical work;
- portfolios of assessment evidence; and
- exam papers.

Teachers and assessors are very experienced and detect plagiarism easily by:

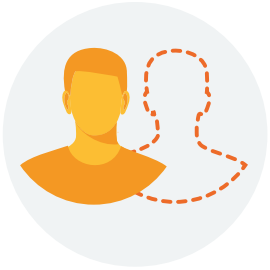
- noticing changes in the style of writing and use of language of a candidate;
- being very familiar with work on the topic concerned (they may have read or seen the source being used or even marked the essay copied from); and
- using internet search engines and specialised computer software to match phrases or pieces of text with the original source.

Your son/daughter/ward should make sure they reference all source material, text and images that they present in their work. They should make sure they follow their subject guidance and the teacher's advice in this area.

You can find out more in the JCQ guidance **Plagiarism in assessments – guidance for teachers/ assessors.**

4.3 Copying and collusion

The aim of any assessment is to allow each individual candidate to receive a fair mark for work that is their own and reflects their own efforts and abilities.



Your son/daughter/ward must only submit work that is their own. They should not copy work from another person's exam script, controlled assessment or coursework, nor should they borrow work to copy.

Your son/daughter/ward must not lend their work to another person or show anyone else their answers. Even if they lend work and did not know it was going to be copied, it is still malpractice. If they allow someone to copy their work this is even more serious.

Each of these circumstances will result in penalties being applied.

Where candidates work together when preparing for assessment, it is usual that they must submit an individual piece for the actual assessment. Working together beyond what is permitted in a subject is categorised as collusion by JCQ. Where collaboration and sharing of work has resulted in similarities in work submitted for a number of candidates, this is malpractice and a range of penalties will apply (depending on the extent of the similarities). You can help support your son/daughter/ward to make sure they do not work with other candidates more than is allowed.

4.4 Sharing information and using social media

Your son/daughter/ward should be careful about sharing or attempting to share information which could be exam/assessment-related. This includes either verbally or in written form, including via social media or mobile phone applications. It can be easy to breach rules without realising it. Make sure they know they should not:

- ask others about what questions their exam will include (even if no one tells them);
- post assessment work on social media which may allow it to be copied;
- know confidential exam/assessment-related information in advance of an exam/assessment;
- exchange, obtain, receive or pass on exam/assessment-related information by any means – or attempt to do so;
- fail to report to their school/college any exam or assessment-related information being shared; and
- pass on rumours of exam or assessment content.

You or your son/daughter/ward must tell CCEA or your school/college about exam information being shared.

Misusing or attempting to misuse assessment material resources can have very serious consequences.

CCEA monitor social media and will investigate any inappropriate information shared.

Your son/daughter/ward's school/college will give all their candidates advice on this area, and you can familiarise yourself with the JCQ's guidance on **Using social media and examinations/ assessments** available at **www.jcq.org.uk**

4.5 Having unauthorised material in the exam/assessment

Your son/daughter/ward should not bring any unauthorised materials into the exam/assessment room. As well as phones, watches etc, as detailed above, this includes:

- calculators or dictionaries where they are not allowed;
- notes, study guides and essay plans, etc, including where they are not relevant to the assessment; and
- bringing in permitted annotations or notes in the wrong format.

4.6 Breach of exam conditions

JCQ set out the rules that schools/colleges must follow when conducting exams and assessments. Your son/daughter/ward will have been told what these rules are, and how they should behave during exams and assessments, by the school/college. The staff will take candidates through the **Information for candidates documents** (available at **www.jcq.org.uk**) so they are aware of the rules.

To support your son/daughter/ward, you can remind them that during an exam or assessment session they must:

- sit in their allocated seat and not start writing until the invigilator tells them to fill in all the details required on the front of the question paper and/or answer booklet;
- stop writing as soon as the time has ended, not remove an exam script from the room and not engage in any disruptive behaviour;
- not talk before, during or after an exam about exam matters, pass notes or accept notes;
- not write inappropriate offensive or obscene material within scripts such as comments about staff or assessors; and
- not destroy their own work, destroy another candidate's work or facilitate malpractice by others.

See also the JCQ **Warning to candidates** poster.

Please note: It is important your son/daughter/ward is aware of the rules around exams and assessment and makes sure to comply with them. It may be that they break the rules by mistake or through forgetfulness; however, this is still malpractice and penalties will be applied, as their actions could have had an impact on the integrity of their exam or assessment.

5 What happens if my child is suspected of malpractice?

Where candidates breach the rules for:

- exams;
- controlled assessment;
- coursework;
- practical work; or
- compilation of portfolios of assessment evidence,

this must be investigated and CCEA may apply penalties.

Investigations will require your son/daughter/ward to be interviewed by their school/college and provide a signed written statement that will be sent to CCEA. Statements will also be taken from any witnesses, such as other students and relevant staff. Statements submitted should be from those who witnessed or have a direct link to the malpractice or the authentication of work, for example an exam invigilator or the teacher of a controlled assessment unit. For this reason statements from parents or guardians are not required in malpractice cases.

Other evidence will be gathered appropriate to the category of malpractice. This may include unauthorised materials, checking of a mobile phone record, copies of candidate work submitted, etc, as required in each individual case.

Where circumstances have arisen that may have influenced the committing of malpractice by either a candidate or a staff member, this information should be submitted to the Head of Centre, who may include this information as part of a plea of mitigation to CCEA.

A report of the school/college's investigation, along with all the supporting evidence, will be sent to CCEA for consideration and action in line with JCQ procedures. CCEA will inform the Head of Centre of any penalties and they will inform your son/daughter/ward and advise them appropriately.

6 What happens if my son/daughter/ ward is found guilty of malpractice?

If your son/daughter/ward is found guilty of malpractice, CCEA will apply penalties in line with the JCQ **Suspected malpractice: policies and procedures** Appendix 6.

All exam boards use the same criteria for determining the penalty applied. These penalties are serious and can impact on your son/daughter/ward's:

- university place;
- chances of returning to school/college; or
- immediate employment opportunities.

Penalties that can be applied include:

- a written warning;
- the loss of marks for a section, component or unit;
- disqualification from a unit or from all units for that subject;
- disqualification from all CCEA qualifications entered for that exam series; or
- a ban from taking assessments or exams for a set period of time, for example one year.

A permanent record will be kept by CCEA of penalties applied to an individual's results. All other information relating to a specific instance of malpractice will be destroyed, following the expiry of CCEA's data retention period.

7 Appeals

The Head of Centre may appeal against a finding of malpractice on behalf of your child. The Head of Centre's decision in this matter is subject to the school/college's internal policies. You or your son/daughter/ward are not entitled to appeal directly to CCEA.

8 Contact information

If you have any queries or concerns in relation to an incident of malpractice, you should speak to the Head of Centre at the school/college your son/daughter/ward attends.

CCEA cannot communicate directly with candidates or a parent/guardian in relation to exam, assessment or malpractice matters. This must be done through the school on the candidate's behalf.

If you or your son/daughter/ward has information about possible malpractice, you should report this to the school/college your son/daughter/ward attends or send the details to **malpractice@ccea.org.uk**.

9 Useful links

You can find additional supporting information in the **Information for candidates documents** at **www.jcq.org.uk**

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COUNCIL FOR THE **CURRICULUM, EXAMINATIONS** AND **ASSESSMENT**
29 Clarendon Road, Clarendon Dock, Belfast BT1 3BG
Tel: +44(0)28 9026 1200
Email: info@ccea.org.uk Web: www.ccea.org.uk

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