



Plagiarism Policy

Introduction

This Qualsafe Awards (QA) policy is intended to provide information and guidance to approved Centres, Trainers, Assessors, Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) and Learners on what constitutes plagiarism, cheating and collusion, what QA and approved Centres can do to prevent it from occurring and how any instances that do occur should be managed.

Definitions

Plagiarism is defined as *the submission of someone else's work, either willingly or unwittingly, as your own work for your own personal gain.*

In relation to Learner assessment, a Learner will be said to have plagiarised someone else's work if it has been confirmed through the assessment marking, moderation or verification processes that the work they have submitted has either been directly copied from, or is highly comparable to, another Learner's work or it has been directly taken from another academic source without appropriate references to that source being included.

Collusion is defined as *a collaboration between two or more individuals through the process of Learner assessment which leads to an assessment outcome being generated which is a false representation of the Learner's knowledge, skills or ability.*

Collusion may take place not only between Learners but also between Trainers/Assessors/IQAs and Learners to ensure Learners pass any assessment. It may also take place between Trainers/Assessors and IQAs responsible for any course delivery and Learner assessments to ensure a Learner or cohort of Learners successfully pass assessment (e.g. when an approved Centre trains their own staff for the purposes of making financial gain for the organisation).

Cheating is defined as *any deliberate act by a Learner (or those in collusion with a Learner) which leads to an assessment outcome being generated which is a false representation of the Learner's knowledge, skills or ability.*

Acts such as a Trainer providing Learners answers to multiple choice question (MCQ) papers, giving hints throughout the course that will provide Learners with an unfair advantage in an assessment, or Learners passing answers to each other during the assessment process would be considered as cheating. QA approved Trainers/Assessors or IQAs who have obtained or been provided with unauthorised access to assessment papers/guidance documents which have been used to give them an unfair advantage when undertaking assessment as a Learner themselves are considered to have cheated.

Learner Assessments – Acceptable Assessment Responses

Through the Learner assessment process for vocational qualifications, Learners are required to demonstrate that they have obtained and retained the knowledge, skills and ability required to satisfy the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of any qualification. Therefore, in order to be awarded any qualification and in terms of assessment evidence, Learners are required to submit their own work and prove through this that they have gained the necessary knowledge, skills and ability required to merit the award of any qualification and the issue of a qualification certificate.

MCQs/Invigilated Exams

Learners undertaking any MCQ assessment or invigilated exam must complete the assessment paper(s):

- in full and as instructed by their course Trainer/Assessor
- under the applicable assessment conditions (which should be explained by their Trainer/Assessor)

- on their own merit
- without obtaining any assistance from any other Learners or Trainers/Assessors to answer assessment questions.

If it is identified that any answers submitted by Learners as their own work have been obtained from another source (e.g. a Learner or Trainer) either prior to or during the assessment process, then this will be considered as either plagiarism, cheating and/or collusion and will result in the assessment outcome being invalidated. Any Centre, Trainer/Assessor or IQA that is found guilty of providing answers to Learners for the purposes of submission may have sanctions imposed upon them by QA, as may the Learner(s) involved.

Practical Assessments

Learners undertaking practical assessments are required to demonstrate specific skills they have obtained through course delivery when requested by their Assessor in order to pass assessment. In terms of assessment evidence, Learners must carry out the practical tasks being assessed:

- as instructed by their course Trainer/Assessor
- under the applicable assessment conditions (which should be explained by their Trainer/Assessor)
- of their own accord
- without obtaining any assistance from any other third party to carry out the practical tasks required.

The assessment must be viewed by the Trainer/Assessor who is then required to pass judgement on whether or not the level of skill demonstrated by the Learner merits the award of a pass.

If any evidence comes to light which confirms that any Learner was illegitimately given any assistance to carry out a practical task assessed but was still awarded a pass by the Trainer/Assessor, then the assessment outcome will be invalidated, as this will be considered to be collusion/cheating. Similarly, if any evidence confirms that a Learner undertook a practical assessment and could not demonstrate the necessary skills to merit a pass but was awarded such by a Trainer/Assessor regardless, then the assessment outcome will be invalidated. Again, QA may impose sanctions on any Centre, Trainer/Assessor or IQA that is found guilty of such activity.

Learner Workbooks

Learners who are required to submit completed workbooks as part of the assessment process for any qualification must ensure that the answers they submit in the workbooks are their own work and in their own words. In doing this, Learners will demonstrate that they have retained the knowledge and understanding required to pass assessment.

Learners who use academic sources (e.g. books, websites) to demonstrate the knowledge required to pass assessment should reference the sources appropriately. In order to appropriately reference any source and as a minimum, Learners must include the following details:

- author
- title of the book, article, journal or other work
- date of publication
- page numbers referenced
- URL (where the source is a webpage).

Learners who submit work which is either a 100% match or highly/directly comparable to either another Learners work or another academic source will be considered guilty of plagiarism (and/or cheating/collusion) and their assessment outcomes will be invalidated.

Also, if any Learner does not make appropriate references to the sources used to formulate assessment answers, then this will be considered as plagiarism and their assessment outcomes will be invalidated.

QA Approved Centre Responsibilities

QA approved Centres are required to meet with various requirements relating to qualification delivery and Learner assessments in order to maintain their approved status with QA. In meeting these requirements, QA approved Centres are required to take all necessary steps to ensure the security and integrity of the Learner assessment process with a view to the prevention of plagiarism, collusion or cheating. This includes measures such as ensuring:

- All Learners have read and understood their responsibilities as outlined in the *QA Learner Agreement* (signing the Learner Register for a course confirms acceptance of these responsibilities)
- Access is restricted to QA Guide to Assessing documents at Centre level (e.g. only those involved in assessing Learners and internal quality assurance should ideally be permitted access)
- All Learner assessment paperwork is stored securely prior to and after assessment has taken place (this includes the transportation of paperwork between locations)
- All assessments are carried out under appropriate assessment conditions
- All assessments are carried out in line with the requirements of the relevant QA qualification specifications, marking guides and Guide to Assessing documents
- Copies of all assessment paperwork that are sent electronically by the Centre are sent using secure methods

During MCQ assessments and invigilated exams, Trainers/Assessors must be aware of their responsibility to ensure that Learners do not attempt to plagiarise, collude or cheat. Trainers/Assessors must be vigilant at all times to ensure no attempts are made during assessments/exams to pass answers or view other Learner's question papers.

Trainers, Assessors and IQAs who are responsible for managing the Learner assessment process at approved Centres must also be aware of their responsibility to check when marking and internally quality assuring assessments for any indication that plagiarism, collusion or cheating has taken place. This includes, as examples,

- directly comparing answers provided in Learner workbooks submitted by a Learner cohort to ensure they are not 100% or directly comparable to each other
- checking that MCQ paper responses do not contain the exact same errors across a Learner cohort
- checking that invigilated exam answers do not contain 100% or directly comparable answers

Any Trainer/Assessor who suspects or identifies that plagiarism, collusion or cheating has taken place through any assessment process should inform the Responsible Person for the Centre of the situation immediately. The situation should then be investigated in line with the Centre's own malpractice/investigation policy. Once the events which have occurred have been established and the investigation concluded, the Responsible Person for the Centre should then provide QA with an update with respect to any actions, outcomes or sanctions the Centre itself has applied to those responsible.

QA Responsibilities

QA is an awarding organisation recognised and regulated in the UK by the qualification regulators Ofqual, Qualification Wales and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessments (CCEA). As such, QA is required to maintain compliance with all regulatory requirements imposed by the regulators. As part of our responsibilities in this respect, QA is required to take all necessary steps to prevent Adverse Effects from occurring in relation to Learner assessment. Essentially, an Adverse Effect occurs through the Learner assessment process when an act, omission, event, incident or circumstance gives rise to Learners being advantaged or disadvantaged in some fashion.

Through the process of developing qualifications and Learner assessments, QA will consider the ways in which the security and integrity of Learner assessments could potentially be compromised, including the ways in which Learner plagiarism, cheating and collusion could take place in relation to the applicable qualification assessment methods. In considering this, QA will implement security measures, create assessment guidance documentation and provide advice and guidance to QA approved Centres, Trainers, Assessors and IQAs with a view to preventing plagiarism, cheating, collusion and, as a consequence, Adverse Effects from occurring through the Learner assessment process. The preventative measures implemented will differ dependent on the assessment methodology for each qualification.

QA also has a responsibility to ensure that Learners undertaking our qualifications understand what is expected of them in terms of their behaviour and performance through course delivery and the qualification assessment process. QA has produced a *Learner Agreement* which all Learners undertaking QA qualifications must read, understand and abide by and this includes the detail that they must refrain from any activity which would constitute Learner malpractice (i.e. plagiarism, collusion or cheating).

QA has also produced a *Malpractice and Maladministration Policy* which is freely available to all on the QA website. This policy outlines definitions of malpractice and maladministration, approved centre responsibilities in identifying and investigating such and details of the investigation process carried out by QA when suspected or actual cases of malpractice/maladministration arise. Plagiarism, cheating and collusion can all be classed as malpractice in relation to the Learner assessment process.

QA will from time to time obtain information from approved Centres, through external quality assurance activity or other sources (e.g. whistleblowers) which suggests Learner plagiarism, collusion or cheating has taken place. Where necessary (it may not be when a Centre has already conducted their own investigation and passed information to QA), QA will investigate the scenario to establish the circumstances surrounding the events that have occurred. Once the investigation has been carried out and concluded, QA will decide on the outcomes and what actions require to be taken.

Consequences for Learners

Any Learner who is found guilty of plagiarism, collusion or cheating (i.e. Learner malpractice) through the assessment process will have their assessment outcome invalidated and will not be certificated for the qualification undertaken (in cases where guilt has been established prior to the processing of Learner results). Learners who have already been certificated prior to guilt being established (in cases where information has become available after certification takes place) will have their certificates revoked.

QA also has a range of Learner sanctions available which will be imposed on those found guilty of Learner malpractice. The level of sanction imposed will be dependent on the severity of the situation. Further details on the range of available sanctions can be found in *Appendix 3 (Learners)* of the *QA Sanctions Policy* freely available on the QA website.

Learners who hold any professional registrations (e.g. medical professionals who are registered with the HCPC) should be aware that QA may also inform the relevant professional bodies if sanctions have been imposed on Learners who have been found guilty of plagiarism, collusion or cheating.

Consequences for Trainers, Assessors and IQAs

Any Trainer, Assessor or IQA who has been found to have colluded with any Learner(s) with a view to aiding plagiarism or cheating through the assessment process will be considered to be guilty of malpractice and will have sanctions imposed on them by QA. The severity of the sanctions imposed will be dependent on the severity of the circumstances. Further details on the range of available sanctions can be found in *Appendix 2 (Trainers, Assessors and IQAs)* of the *QA Sanctions Policy*.

Trainers, Assessors or IQAs who hold any professional registrations should be aware that QA may also inform the relevant professional bodies if sanctions have been applied to those who have been found guilty of malpractice.

Consequences for Approved Centres

QA approved Centres must be aware that if any Trainers, Assessors or IQAs operating at the Centre are found guilty of malpractice, then QA may also apply sanctions to the Centre. The Responsible Person for any approved Centre has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that malpractice does not take place, including the aiding and abetting of Learner malpractice by any centre staff. Again the severity of the sanctions will be decided on a case by case basis and further details on the range of available sanctions can be found in *Appendix 1 (Centres)* of the *QA Sanctions Policy*.