



ICA Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy applies to all ICA learners and apprentices, regardless of study mode or location. It covers all assessment activities, including assessments, examinations, and apprenticeship assessment components. It aligns with ICA internal standards and Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition.

Malpractice includes plagiarism, collusion, impersonation, cheating, falsification, and inappropriate conduct. It may be committed by learners, apprentices, training providers, or employers. Maladministration refers to persistent administrative failures, such as poor record keeping, late registrations, and failure to adhere to ICA procedures.

Academic malpractice is any activity, intentional or otherwise, that is likely to undermine the integrity essential to the qualifications offered by ICA. It includes plagiarism, collusion, fabrication or falsification of results, and anything else that could result in unearned or undeserved credit or an unfair advantage over other learners.

Academic malpractice can result from a deliberate act of cheating but may be committed unintentionally, for example, through failure to cite sources of information adequately. Whether intended or not, all incidents of academic malpractice will be treated seriously by ICA.

Evidence of mitigating circumstances will always be assessed, but it is for ICA to decide whether they may be taken into account when determining the penalty to be applied. This will enable ICA to consider offering appropriate help, in accordance with the ICA policy and procedures on mitigating circumstances.

ICA is obliged, when determining a penalty to be imposed as a consequence of academic malpractice, to take into account the consequences that the penalty will have for the academic progression of the learner concerned.

ICA regards all forms of academic malpractice as serious matters and the most serious cases may result in qualifications being permanently withheld and/or professional membership cancellation.

2. Cheating in assessments consists of any of the following activities

2.1 Cheating in assessments consists of any of the following activities.

- Communicating with or copying from any other learner during an examination, except in so far as the guidance may specifically permit.
- Other than where the assessment rules specifically permit, communicating during an examination with any person other than a properly authorised invigilator.
- Introducing any written, printed or electronically stored information into an examination room, unless expressly permitted by the assessment rules for the examination.
- Gaining access to any unauthorised material relating to an examination during or before the specified time.
- Making use of electronic calculators and other portable electronic devices except as permitted under the assessment rules of the examination, or provisions for learners with additional assessment requirements.
- Using artificial intelligence tools to generate, modify, or assist with assessment responses unless explicitly permitted by the assessment rules. This includes submitting AI-generated content as original work, or using AI to fabricate, alter, or enhance answers during or in preparation for an assessment. See also section 2.7 for detailed guidance on acceptable use of AI tools in assessments.
- Fabricating information in an assessment, e.g. use of artificial citations.
- Impersonating another learner or procuring an impersonator.

2.2 Plagiarism

Learner plagiarism is a form of academic malpractice and is defined as presenting the ideas, work, or words of other people without proper, clear, and unambiguous acknowledgement. This includes:

- Self-plagiarism, which occurs when a learner submits work that they have previously presented for assessment, either in whole or in part, without appropriate citation. Although the work is the learner's own, reusing it without disclosure undermines the integrity of the assessment process, as each submission is expected to represent new, original effort and learning.

- Using artificial intelligence tools (e.g. large language models or essay generators) to produce full or partial assessment responses, especially where the content is submitted without appropriate referencing or is presented as the learner's own original work.
- Any form of outsourced or automated content creation that bypasses the learner's own intellectual effort and misrepresents authorship.

One of the most blatant examples of plagiarism is copying another learner's work.

It is essential to make clear in your assessments the distinction between your own original contributions and any material derived from other sources, including your own prior work.

Wholesale verbatim copying or insertion of multiple paragraphs of another person's work (published or unpublished and including material freely available in electronic form and including work of another learner) without acknowledgement of sources.

- The close paraphrasing of another person's work by simply changing some of the words or altering the order of presentation, without acknowledgement.
- Unacknowledged quotation of phrases from another person's work.
- The deliberate and detailed presentation of another person's concept as one's own.
- Ghost writing or contract cheating – where a learner requests another learner or external body to write/ produce material for them for purposes of submitting it as their own. This also includes the downloading or purchasing of essays from the internet.
- Resubmitting in its entirety (or substantial sections of) one's own work which has previously been submitted for another module or programme.

2.3 Collusion

Collusion occurs where a learner:

- Knowingly submits as entirely his/her own work, work produced in collaboration with another person without approval of the ICA
- Collaborates with another learner in the production of work that they know is intended to be submitted as that other learner's own unaided work
- Knowingly permits another learner to copy all or part of their own work and to submit it as that learner's own unaided work.

2.4 Fabrication and falsification

- Fabrication of results occurs when a learner falsely claims, for example, to have carried out tests, research or observations as part of his/her assessed work, or presents fabricated results arising from the same with the object of gaining an advantage.
- Fabrication may also include, for example, reporting/presentation of artificial references or other source material purporting to demonstrate a depth of reading/knowledge beyond that undertaken, or to deflect the reader from plagiarised material, e.g. embellishment of the bibliography.
- Falsification also includes making false statements or falsifying evidence in support of applications, for example for mitigating circumstances or academic appeals. Where evidence is related to disability and reasonable adjustments, ICA reserves the right to seek a second opinion and/or further information if there is a substantial concern about the level, or standard, of evidence.

2.5 Impersonation

Impersonation is the act of one individual assuming the identity of another with the intent to deceive within the assessment process. This constitutes a serious form of malpractice. It includes, but is not limited to, situations where ICA cannot verify the identity of the learner or apprentice during an assessment.

For example, during remote invigilation, turning off your camera or otherwise obstructing identity verification may be treated as impersonation. ICA requires clear and continuous visual confirmation of the learner throughout the assessment to ensure integrity and authenticity.

2.6 Producing inappropriate or offensive material that includes, but not limited to:

- Obscenities, offensive comments
- Racist remarks, lewd comments and drawings
- Material that may cause offence to ICA markers or ICA members of staff.

2.7 Use of AI

ICA supports the tools that can assist learning such as large language models (LLMs - e.g. chatbots such as ChatGPT). What must be understood however, is that it is the way that LLMs are used that is important.

If used as a research tool to generate ideas, ICA views this as a legitimate way to aid learning. But, if a LLM is used to assist assessment writing, learners must cite the LLM as a source of reference. If direct quotations are used from the text generated by a chatbot, these must also follow referencing conventions i.e. be placed in quotation marks, and the source properly acknowledged.

Under no circumstances is it acceptable to copy large amounts of text verbatim, even if correctly referenced. This will invite penalties since learners are required to present their own original work, which ICA considers an essential part of learner development.

Learners using an LLM as a tool to help them should also remember that they can present inaccurate information and they may generate biased or, at times, irrational responses. They are often not reliable and should be used with considerable caution.

Therefore, learners should keep their assessment or project writing separated from any research generated by a LLM. Where information generated by a LLM is used, they should check for accuracy carefully and ensure what they submit for assessment is their own original work written in their own words, and is always appropriately referenced.

2.8. ICA use of plagiarism detection software

ICA uses plagiarism detection software to check that learners are working in a fair and academically appropriate manner, ICA uses text comparison software to detect potential cases of plagiarism in work that is submitted for assessment.

Our plagiarism software carries out the equivalent of an Internet search, looking for matches between the text included in a piece of work submitted by a learner with all forms of information and resources publicly available on the Internet.

The primary use of plagiarism detection software is to identify instances of direct copying and/or improper referencing of various source materials. It may also be used to compare each learner's assessments with module content and commonly used or provided references. Additionally, the software will check for indicators of AI-generated content and flag these where appropriate.

For each assessment submitted to our plagiarism software, an 'originality' report is produced showing the percentage of text that matches other sources. These reports will be made available to the academic regulation and standards team and in some cases, they may decide to take the matter further. This may result in some further guidance about academic conduct and support to avoid any further incidents or, if more serious, may result in further action being taken.

Depending on the questions being asked and the format of the submitted answer, some level of matching between scripts and with other sources is expected. The academic regulation and standards team will take all such matters into account when reviewing each of the reports and deciding whether a learner has plagiarised.

The ICA designated officer will assess whether or not the evidence suggests that academic malpractice may have been committed.

If the ICA designated officer judges that the case does not constitute academic malpractice but rather poor academic practice, the matter will be noted to the learner, with appropriate advice as to how to proceed.

In determining whether an instance constitutes a repeat (subsequent) offence, penalties applied in a previous programme of study/award shall not be included. Repeat offences are those that take place in work contributing to a single award.

After a penalty is applied to an assessment within a programme, any further infringement within that programme will be considered a repeat offence.

3. Responsibilities

ICA is responsible for ensuring all stakeholders understand and comply with academic standards. Learners and apprentices must submit original work and follow assessment rules. Where relevant, training providers and employers must prevent, report, and act on malpractice and maladministration.

4. Principles governing submission of work

The assessment of learners is based on the principle that, unless clearly stated in the assessment criteria, the work submitted by a registered learner for assessment has been carried out by that learner and is their own work.

Where group work is an approved part of the assessment process, the assessment instructions will make clear the nature and content of, and assessment criteria for, such group-based activity.

All elements of assessment must be the learner's own work and any passages quoted or paraphrased, or opinions relied upon, must be properly attributed and cited using the correct method. Quotation marks must always be used for direct quotations.

The ICA accepts that a learner's writing can be influenced by the work of others, but such work must not be copied or paraphrased in whole sentences or paragraphs without appropriate acknowledgement.

By submitting work for assessment, learners are declaring that the submitted work is their own, and that it has not been submitted in a similar or identical form towards any other assessment or qualification by the learner or any other person.

Submission is undertaken by uploading the work online through a learner account. If this procedure has not been followed, the ICA has the right to refuse to mark the piece until the learner has complied.

5. Reporting procedures

Sometimes, an individual or member of the public has reason to believe that malpractice has occurred or will occur in an examination or assessment. Concerns should be reported to ICA assessment team via our website to [contact us](#). Members of staff who wish to report suspected malpractice relating to where they work are protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA). Members of the public are not protected by PIDA, but ICA will make every effort to protect their identity if that is what they wish, unless legally obliged to release it.

ICA takes all reports of malpractice seriously, but in order to investigate concerns effectively we will require information of a reasonably detailed standard. We will accept anonymous reports, although knowing how the information has been obtained and the reporting party's relationship with the learner(s) may add credibility.

Anyone wishing to report suspected malpractice to ICA should include as much of the following information as possible/is relevant:

- the qualifications and subjects involved
- the learner(s) involved • the regulations breached/specific nature of suspected malpractice
- when and where the suspected malpractice occurred
- how the issue became apparent. Documentary evidence can be particularly useful and should be provided where it is available.

Reports of suspected malpractice should be sent to the ICA assessment team via our website. Anonymous reports are accepted but may limit investigation. ICA will protect identities unless legally required to disclose.

6. Investigation procedures

Once a report has been made about potential academic malpractice or maladministration, ICA will appoint a designated officer to begin an investigation. The investigation will conclude whether further action to be taken and if so, will recommend a penalty. All ,malpractice cases will be presented at the assessment board and confirmed by the board before the results are released and learners informed of the decision which will be reflected in the marks awarded if a reduction in marks or fail has been deemed appropriate. Learners have the right of appeal within the terms of the appeal's policy.

7. Assessing the severity of academic malpractice

Each case is different, and malpractice investigation panel will be expected to use their judgement in deciding the seriousness of an offence and deciding whether there are circumstances that might affect the severity of the penalty.

There must be an attempt to ensure consistency of treatment between cases, making and recording a judgement about what is a proportionate penalty.

Factors to take into account when determining the penalty and its proportionality include:

- the learner's level of study: the more advanced and experienced the learner (the more serious the offence)
- the proportion of the whole course represented by the piece of work that was subject to malpractice (the higher the proportion, the more serious the offence)
- the learner's previous history (a subsequent offence, occurring after a learner has already received a warning or a penalty for academic malpractice, is more serious than a first offence)
- the degree of intention to deceive in the piece of work in question (which might be assessed not only by, for example, efforts to change wording, poor referencing or lack of referencing of plagiarised material, evidence from earlier drafts, but also in the hearing itself by failure to tell the truth).

The judgement made on any case shall give details of the relevant factors taken into account, stating the degree to which they contributed to the decision and will state the malpractice investigation panel intentions as regards the impact of the penalty on progression/qualification awarded. It will also refer to any other matters taken into account; for example, any mitigating circumstances, so that precedence and best practice may be established. The written record will also be important in the event that the learner makes an appeal concerning the disciplinary process/outcome.

8. Outcomes of cases taken to investigation panel

If the malpractice investigation panel finds that there is no evidence of malpractice, the assessment should proceed as normal.

Where the malpractice investigation panel decides that there is de facto evidence that malpractice has occurred, one of the following recommended penalties will be applied.

- Where there are exceptional mitigating circumstances, assessment is set aside and the learner is required to submit a new or revised item without incurring a penalty.
- The mark for the specific item is reduced. Where this results in a fail grade, the learner will be subject to normal reassessment (resit) procedures.
- The learner is deemed to have failed in the specific element of assessment where the malpractice has occurred. The learner will be subject to normal reassessment (resit) procedures.
- The learner may be expelled from the course without the award for which they registered and/or barred from any future assessment and/or withdrawn as a member of ICA.

9. Appeals

Appeals must be based on procedural errors, bias, or new evidence. Please see our appeals policy for details.

10. Confidentiality and whistleblowing

ICA protects whistleblowers under the Public Interest Disclosure Act. Identities are kept confidential unless disclosure is legally required.



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