

Public Interest Disclosure Act (Whistleblowing)

Guidance in relation to suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments

This guidance is principally for centre staff who may witness malpractice in examinations and assessments and are unsure about what action to take.

The security and integrity of examinations and assessments is essential if public confidence in qualifications is to be maintained. The approach taken by the awarding bodies to malpractice is set out in the JCQ *Suspected Malpractice* document.

What should you do if you see malpractice taking place in examinations or assessments?

If you are a candidate or a member of the public, you should report what you witness to the examination centre concerned.

If you work for an examination centre or are involved in examinations or assessments and you witness activity that you are concerned may be malpractice, you should act upon it.

Examination centres are required by the JCQ *Suspected Malpractice* document to refer malpractice to the appropriate awarding body.

You can also refer your concern to the awarding body (see below).

What if you are concerned about retaliation for reporting suspected malpractice?

If you work for an examination centre or are involved in examinations or assessments it is likely that the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) offers you legal protection from being dismissed or penalised for raising certain serious concerns (“blowing the whistle”). Given the importance of the integrity of the qualifications system, suspected malpractice is likely to be a serious concern.

It is probable that your organisation has a whistleblowing policy. If it does, you should follow that policy. If it does not, you should raise your concern with someone senior within the centre.

If you do not feel safe raising the matter within the centre, or you have done so and are concerned that no action has been taken, you could consider making your disclosure to a “prescribed person” – which includes Ofqual and Qualifications Wales (the regulators in England and Wales respectively). The full list of prescribed persons and bodies are detailed in this guidance:

GovUK: [Blowing the whistle a list of prescribed people and bodies](#)

Who do you talk to and what happens if you contact the awarding body?

Each awarding body has staff who deal with malpractice. You can talk to them in confidence and explain your concerns. However, as awarding bodies are not prescribed bodies as defined by the PIDA they cannot promise you the legal protections detailed in PIDA.

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The awarding body will:

- Understand the difficult position that you are in;
- Have experience of similar situations; **and**
- Explain the importance of supporting evidence and the sort of evidence that might help in your particular case.

The awarding body will make every effort to protect your identity, if that is what you wish, unless legally obliged to release it (for example, in the course of a police investigation). Please be aware that it will not be possible for the awarding body to provide you with a report on the findings or outcome of any investigation that may ensue.

Which awarding body is contacted will depend on the qualification where malpractice is suspected. You can contact a malpractice expert within the specific awarding body as shown below:

AQA	Irregularities@aqa.org.uk	0161 958 3736
CCEA	malpractice@ccea.org.uk	028 90 261200 ext 2203
City & Guilds	investigationandcompliance@cityandguilds.com	020 7294 2775
Pearson	pqsmalpractice@pearson.com	020 7190445
OCR	malpractice@ocr.org.uk	01223 553998
WJEC	malpractice@wjec.co.uk	029 20265448
NCFE	CustomerCompliance@ncfe.org.uk	0191 2408835

You may find the following websites useful:

[JCQ](#)

[Public Concern at Work](#)

[Ofqual](#)