

Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

1. Introduction

This policy is aimed at our customers (staff, hosts, candidates, and learners) who are delivering or enrolled onto Later Life Training (LLT) programmes and who are involved in suspected or actual malpractice/maladministration. It is also for use by our staff to ensure they deal with all malpractice and maladministration investigations in a consistent manner.

It sets out the steps LLT and learners or other staff must follow when reporting suspected or actual cases of malpractice/maladministration and our responsibilities in dealing with such cases. It also sets out the procedural steps we will follow when reviewing the cases.

2. LLT's responsibility

It is important that all staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our training courses, and learners are fully aware of the contents of the policy and that we have arrangements in place to prevent and investigate instances of malpractice and maladministration.

3. Definition of Malpractice and Maladministration

Malpractice is a dereliction of professional duty or a failure to exercise an ordinary degree of professional skill or knowledge when rendering professional services which results in injury, loss, or damage.

Maladministration is essentially any activity or practice which results in non-compliance with administrative regulations and requirements and includes the application of persistent mistakes or poor administration.

3.1. Examples of malpractice:

- Failure to carry out internal assessment, internal moderation or internal verification in accordance with our requirements.
- Deliberate failure to adhere to our learner registration and certification procedure.
- Deliberate failure to adhere to our centre recognition and qualification approval requirements or actions assigned to your centre.
- Deliberate failure to maintain appropriate auditable records, e.g., certification claims and/or forgery of evidence.
- Fraudulent claim(s) for certificates.
- Intentional withholding of information from us which is critical to maintaining the rigour of quality assurance and standards of qualifications.
- Collusion or permitting collusion in exams/assessments.

- Learners still working towards qualification after certification has been claimed.
- Plagiarism by learners/staff
- Copying from another learner (including using ICT to do so)

Malpractice covers any deliberate actions, neglect, default or other practice that compromises, or could compromise:

- the assessment processes
- the integrity of a regulated qualification
- the validity of a result or certificate
- the reputation and credibility of LLT or,
- the qualification or the wider qualifications community.

Malpractice may include a range of issues from the failure to maintain appropriate records or systems, to the deliberate falsification of records to claim certificates

For the purpose of this policy this term also covers misconduct and forms of unnecessary discrimination or bias towards certain or groups of learners.

3.2. Examples of maladministration:

- Persistent failure to adhere to LLTs learner registration and certification procedures.
- Persistent failure to adhere to LLTs training requirements.
- Late learner registrations (both infrequent and persistent)
- Unreasonable delays responding to requests and/or communications from LLT
- Inaccurate claim for certificates
- Failure to maintain appropriate auditable records, e.g. certification claims and/or forgery of evidence
- Withholding of information, by deliberate act or omission, from which is required to assure LLT.

4. Process for making an allegation of malpractice or maladministration

Anybody who identifies or is made aware of suspected or actual cases of malpractice or maladministration at any time must immediately notify the Directors of LLT. In doing so they should put them in writing/email and enclose appropriate supporting evidence.

All allegations must include (where possible):

- Learner's name, course and code.
- LLTs staff name and job role - if they are involved in the case.
- Details of the course/training and nature of the service affected.
- Nature of the suspected or actual malpractice and associated dates, details and outcome of any initial investigation carried out by the centre or anybody else involved in the case, including any mitigating circumstances.

LLT Directors will then conduct an initial investigation to ensure that staff involved in the initial investigation are competent and have no personal interest in the outcome of the investigation.

In all cases of suspected malpractice and maladministration reported we will protect the identity of the 'informant' in accordance with our duty of confidentiality and/or any other legal duty.

5. Confidentiality and whistle blowing

Sometimes a person making an allegation of malpractice or maladministration may wish to remain anonymous. Although it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us; however, if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences, you may request that the LLT do not divulge your identity.

While we are prepared to investigate issues which are reported to us anonymously, we will always try to confirm an allegation by means of a separate investigation before taking up the matter with those to whom the allegation relates.

6. Responsibility for the investigation

All suspected cases of maladministration and malpractice will be examined promptly by LLT to establish if malpractice or maladministration has occurred and LLT will take all reasonable steps to prevent any adverse effect from the occurrence.

LLT will acknowledge receipt, as appropriate, to external parties within 48 hours.

A designated LLT Director will be responsible for ensuring the investigation is carried out in a prompt and effective manner and in accordance with the procedures in this policy and will allocate a relevant member of staff to lead the investigation and establish whether or not the malpractice or maladministration has occurred, and review any supporting evidence received or gathered by LLT.

6.1. Notifying relevant parties:

Where applicable, LLT will inform the appropriate regulatory authorities if we believe there has been an incident of malpractice or maladministration which could either invalidate the award of a qualification or if it could affect another awarding organisation.

Where the allegation may affect another awarding organisation and their provision, we will also inform them in accordance with the regulatory requirements and obligations imposed by the regulator Ofqual. If we do not know the details of organisations that might be affected, we will ask Ofqual to help us identify relevant parties that should be informed.

6.2. Investigation timelines and summary process:

LLT aim to action and resolve all stages of the investigation within 10 working days of receipt of the allegation.

The fundamental principle of all investigations is to conduct them in a fair, reasonable and legal manner, ensuring that all relevant evidence is considered

without bias. In doing so investigations will be based around the following broad objectives:

- To establish the facts relating to allegations/complaints to determine whether any irregularities have occurred. To identify the cause of the irregularities and those involved.
- To establish the scale of the irregularities.
- To evaluate any action already taken.
- To determine whether remedial action is required to reduce the risk to current registered learners and to preserve the integrity of LLT and the qualification.
- To identify any adverse patterns or trends.

The investigation may involve a request for further information from relevant parties and/or interviews with personnel involved in the investigation. Therefore, we will:

- Ensure all material collected as part of an investigation must be kept secure
- If an investigation leads to invalidation of certificates, or criminal or civil prosecution, we will retain all records and original documentation relating to the case until the case and any appeals have been heard and for five years thereafter.
- Expect all parties, who are either directly or indirectly involved in the investigation, to fully co-operate with us.

Either at notification of a suspected or actual case of malpractice or maladministration and/or at any time during the investigation, LLT reserve the right to withhold a learners', and/or cohorts', results.

Where a member of LLTs staff is under investigation we may suspend them or move them to other duties until the investigation is complete.

Throughout the investigation, our director will be responsible for overseeing the work of the investigation team to ensure that due process is being followed, appropriate evidence has been gathered and reviewed and for liaising with and keeping relevant parties informed.

6.3. Investigation report

After an investigation, LLT will produce a draft report for the parties concerned to check for actual accuracy. Any subsequent amendments will be agreed between the parties concerned and LLT. The report will:

- Identify where the breach, if any, occurred.
- Confirm the facts of the case.
- Identify who is responsible for the breach (if any).
- Confirm an appropriate level of remedial action to be applied.

LLT will make the final report available to the parties concerned and to the regulatory authorities and other external agencies as required.

If it was an independent/third party that notified us of the suspected or actual case of malpractice, LLT will also inform them of the outcome – normally within 10 working days of making our decision, in doing so we may withhold some details if to disclose such information would breach a duty of confidentiality or any other legal duty.

If it is an internal investigation against a member of our staff, the report will be agreed by LLT along with the relevant internal managers and appropriate internal disciplinary procedures will be implemented.

6.4. Investigation outcomes

If the investigation confirms that malpractice or maladministration has taken place, we will consider what action to take to:

- Minimise the risk to the integrity of current and future certification now and in the future.
- Maintain public confidence in the delivery and awarding of qualifications.
- Discourage others from carrying out similar instances of malpractice or maladministration.
- Ensure there has been no gain to LLT from compromising our standards.

The action we will or could take may include:

- Imposing actions to address the instance of malpractice/ maladministration and to prevent reoccurrence.
- In cases where certificates are deemed to be invalid, inform the Awarding Organisation concerned and the regulatory authorities why they are invalid and any action to be taken for reassessment and/or for the withdrawal of the certificates. LLT will also let the affected learners know the action we are taking and that their original certificates are invalid and ask – where possible – to return the invalid certificates to the Awarding Organisation.
- Informing relevant third parties, (e.g. funding bodies) of our findings in case they need to take relevant action in relation to the centre.

In addition, to the above, LLT will keep a record of any lessons learnt from the investigation and pass these onto relevant internal colleagues to help prevent the same instance of maladministration or malpractice from reoccurring.

If the relevant party(ies) wishes to appeal against our decision to impose sanctions, they will be referred to our Complaints Procedure.