



Malpractice – Procedures

Introduction

The IFE has established standards for the implementation and administration of its examinations. These processes are in place to ensure that all candidates taking the IFE's examinations experience the same assessment conditions and therefore all examinations take place in equitable circumstances.

Candidates are made aware of the conditions via the "Rules and Information for Candidates taking Examinations" handbook which is issued to all candidates; this is also available via the IFE's website. In addition, Invigilators read out the rules to be followed during examinations at the start of each examination session. Examination centres are reminded of the conditions via the Examination Centre Handbook and via the Invigilation Announcement document.

Unfortunately, examination circumstances are occasionally different from those specified by the IFE. Any act that is a breach of the examination arrangements specified by the IFE and which confers an unfair advantage on one or more candidates constitutes malpractice.

The IFE will investigate all possible cases of malpractice and, where warranted, apply appropriate sanctions in order to preserve the integrity of the IFE's qualifications and to ensure that all candidates have been treated in an equitable way.

The IFE's procedures have been designed to comply with the requirements of its regulators and to follow common best practice applied by other UK awarding organisations.

What is Malpractice?

Malpractice may be committed by candidates or by examination centres. Any activity that undermines the integrity and fairness of the assessment process will be viewed as malpractice. The following list of examples is not exhaustive but provides an indication of the types of activity which will be investigated.

Examples of candidate malpractice:

- use of notes, books or other unauthorised materials in examinations
- use of mobiles phones, smart watches or other electronic devices to access information during examinations
- collusion with other candidates to copy/share answers
- causing disruption during the examination
- falsifying information

Examples of centre malpractice:

- failing to comply with invigilation requirements and/or behaving in a way that undermines the integrity of IFE examinations
- allowing access to unauthorised materials (eg notes) or equipment (eg electronic devices) during the examination
- failing to maintain confidentiality of examination materials and/or of the work submitted by candidates
- failure to notify IFE of malpractice or to conduct investigations as requested by IFE
- falsification of documents

Process for dealing with suspected malpractice

- Where malpractice by either candidates or centres is suspected, the IFE will consider the evidence available (eg the candidate's script and the invigilation reports and seating plans submitted by the centre) together with expert feedback (eg from examiners or centre officials).
- The issues raised will be reviewed by IFE staff in the first instance in order to identify whether or not there is an immediate explanation for any anomalies identified. If it appears possible that malpractice could have taken place, an investigation will be initiated.
- If an investigation is undertaken, the IFE will inform the candidate and/or examination centre that this is the case and state why the investigation is taking place.
- The IFE will provide candidates/centres with the opportunity to provide their feedback along with any supporting information/evidence that explains the issues raised by the IFE. Candidates/Centres should present their feedback **in writing and within the timeline provided by the IFE.**
- The IFE's investigation will include **all** of the examinations that the candidate sat; it will also cover examination conditions eg the seating plan submitted by the centre.
- Where more than one candidate is involved in suspected malpractice, the IFE will automatically extend the investigation to review scripts submitted by other candidates who sat examinations at the same time.
- Centres should be aware that the IFE will carry out a full investigation that considers historical information as well as feedback from candidates and centre officials.
- The IFE will provide a timeline for completion of the investigation process.
- Whilst the investigation process is underway, the IFE will hold back the issuing of results for candidate(s) affected by the investigation; if a centre is being investigated, the centre will not be able to offer IFE examinations until the situation has been resolved.
- All cases will be reviewed by the IFE Investigation Panel. The report from the initial investigation will be presented to the IFE Investigation Panel for consideration and for a decision as to the next stage of the process. Any feedback provided by candidates or centres will be presented to the panel.
- If the panel determines that malpractice has taken place, the panel will determine the sanctions to be applied.
- The IFE will inform centres and candidates of the panel's decision and the actions to be taken.

- Candidates/Centres will have the right to appeal against sanctions. Candidates/Centres who wish to appeal must register their appeal **within one calendar month** of the date that the decision was posted/mailed to them by the IFE (i.e. the date appearing on the letter/email). Appeals must be made in writing, clearly setting out the reason for the appeal and using the form provided by IFE. Candidates/Centres should request the appeals documentation from IFE.

Sanctions

Where the IFE Investigation Panel determines that malpractice has taken place, or has been attempted, sanctions will be applied in line with the nature of the malpractice. Examples of the types of sanction applied to candidates by the IFE follow:

- **Disqualification from a specific paper/unit** – eg where candidates have used unauthorised materials/equipment in completing one paper or there is evidence of candidate collusion, the candidate(s) will be disqualified from that paper. Entry fees will not be refunded.
- **Disqualification from all papers towards the full qualification undertaken in the same year** – eg where candidates have used unauthorised materials in completing more than one paper/unit, the IFE reserves the right to disqualify the candidate from all papers/units undertaken during that session ie if a candidate has entered three papers and there is sufficient evidence that the candidate has used unauthorised materials for two of the papers, the IFE reserves the right to disqualify the candidate from all three papers. No entry fees will be returned.
- **Bar entry to future examinations for a set period of time** – eg where the behaviour of the candidates is found to be unacceptable and undermines the credibility of the IFE's examinations, candidates will be disqualified from all papers in the current session and will not be allowed to enter future examinations within the period of the bar. No entry fees will be refunded.

Where a centre is involved in malpractice, the IFE will review whether or not it is possible to accept the centre as an examination venue in the future. If the incident is so severe that the IFE has no option but to sever the link with the centre, the IFE will inform other parties (ie the regulators and other awarding organisations) that should be aware of the risk posed by the centre.

The IFE appreciates that sometimes malpractice can be due to accident and/or error. Where it is clear that the circumstances are due to accident/error, the IFE will endeavour to protect the interests of candidates who are accidentally caught up in malpractice eg through errors made by the examination centre. In these instances, IFE may apply a lesser sanction eg disqualify the candidate for the current examination but provide a deferral option so that candidates can re-take the examination in the following year without the need to pay a further entry fee.

Procedure Review

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