

Malpractice and maladministration policy and process

(includes Whistleblowing)

Relating to Accredited Training Providers (ATPs) and ATP staff delivering CIPFA qualifications and apprenticeships

Please note that any malpractice by students is detailed in the associated policies signposted on page 3.

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Purpose

This policy outlines CIPFA's commitment to preventing and responding to malpractice and maladministration relating to CIPFA qualifications and apprenticeship assessments.

It includes the steps that we will take to manage, mitigate and report potential instances identified in the event that suspected or actual cases of malpractice or maladministration have occurred including our responsibilities in dealing with such cases.

It also sets out the procedural steps we will follow when reviewing the cases.

Where malpractice or maladministration is alleged or suspected, we will investigate to determine whether malpractice or maladministration has occurred and will take all reasonable steps to prevent any resulting Adverse Effect. Where an Adverse Effect has occurred, we will take all necessary steps to mitigate or correct the Adverse Effect and will notify the Regulators accordingly.

This policy is designed to:

- Protect registered students
- Minimise the risk of an adverse effect from occurring
- Help ensure that compliance with regulatory conditions is maintained.

Scope

This policy and process applies to the development, delivery and award of regulated CIPFA apprenticeship assessment and qualifications and is aimed at the users of our qualifications, who are taking, delivering, or assessing our regulated qualifications or units.

Users of our qualifications may be assessment or delivery ATPs, ATP staff, students or contractors. It is essential that all users involved in any way with our qualifications read and understand this policy.

This policy is also for reference by our internal staff to ensure they deal with all malpractice and maladministration investigations in a consistent manner.

Associated Policies

- Assessment Offences Policy and Process
- Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy and Guidance
- Assessment Regulations
- Disciplinary Regulations (students and members)
- Invigilation Policies and Instructions for Invigilators
- Whistleblowing Policy

Responsibilities of ATPs in preventing malpractice and maladministration

All ATP staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications, must be fully aware of the contents of the policy and understand the arrangements that are in place to prevent and investigate instances of malpractice and maladministration.

ATPs must notify us immediately of any potential malpractice or maladministration. Failure to report suspected or actual malpractice/maladministration cases, or to have in place effective arrangements to prevent such cases, may lead to sanctions being imposed on ATPs, ATP staff or students by CIPFA.

Full cooperation with any investigation undertaken by CIPFA is required and compliance with requests for information adhered to within the timelines specified.

As a point of reference, the ATP Agreement should be read and understood at signing, and the conditions within reviewed at various intervals.

As a minimum ATPs must:

- Ensure that this policy is made available to students and that they are made aware of their rights and responsibilities
- Clearly document all procedures to be followed by students in the conduct of assessments and to ensure that students are made aware of these procedures
- Ensure that this policy is made available to staff and professional contractors so that they are aware of their responsibilities in the prevention of malpractice and maladministration
- Ensure that staff and professional contractors remain vigilant to possible instances of malpractice and maladministration
- Communicate any CIPFA changes to systems and procedures to staff/assessors/moderators in a clear and timely manner.

Furthermore, it is a mandatory requirement that all ATPs are also required to have a Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure (or equivalent) that is followed and that reduces the chance of an Adverse Effect from occurring within their centre.

ATPs must provide their malpractice policy to CIPFA if requested to do so and all ATP staff must be fully conversant with CIPFA's policy and procedures for malpractice and maladministration. Students should also be made familiar with this policy and procedure and should have received guidance as to what malpractice means, and what might constitute student malpractice. They should be made aware of the contents of the associated policies and the impact of committing malpractice.

Staff training on malpractice and maladministration within CIPFA and ATPs is also key to raise awareness of malpractice and maladministration and how it can be prevented or mitigated.

Responsibilities of CIPFA in preventing malpractice and maladministration

In order to prevent the occurrence of malpractice and maladministration CIPFA will:

- Ensure that it maintains a rigorous process of ATP approval that considers the ability of the ATPs to conduct CIPFA assessments in an appropriate and secure manner
- Ensure that all ATPs are informed of what activity constitutes malpractice and maladministration; their role in preventing it and the need to communicate relevant points to all members of ATP staff
- Communicate any changes to systems and procedures to ATPs in a clear and timely manner
- Monitor that the internal ATPs procedure for preventing and dealing with malpractice and maladministration is clearly defined and communicated within the ATPs
- Ensure that quality monitoring of all ATPs is carried out regularly and thoroughly by appropriately trained CIPFA staff/representatives
- Ensure that CIPFA sanctions are clearly documented and communicated to all ATPs to clearly state any repercussions of malpractice and maladministration could be.

Definition of Malpractice

Malpractice is any deliberate act, omission, or practice that breaches assessment regulations and compromises the integrity, validity, or fairness of qualifications or assessment outcomes.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) definition of malpractice is:

Malpractice is any act, default or practice which is a breach of the Regulations.

CIPFA align with the view and believe that any act, default or practice which contravenes regulations and compromises the integrity of internal or assessment processes or the validity of certificates is a breach.

Whilst it is usually deliberate, each case will be judged individually and depending on the impact and severity, it may be deemed maladministration rather than malpractice. We recognise that whilst maladministration and malpractice are distinct, the two concepts can be on a continuum. As such they will sometimes blur into the other.

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

Anybody who identifies or is made aware of suspected or actual cases of maladministration at any time must immediately report their findings to their Head of ATP or relevant other senior member in the organisation. In doing so they should put the concerns in writing/email and enclose appropriate supporting evidence.

Examples of Malpractice (non-exhaustive):

By Accredited Training Providers (ATPs) or Staff:

- Breach of ATP or qualification approval conditions
- Insecure storage or misuse of assessment materials

- Deliberate falsification of learner records or certification claims
- Knowingly failing to follow assessment regulations or procedures
- Assisting or prompting learners unfairly during assessment
- Denying access to CIPFA or Ofqual personnel during monitoring
- Withholding information during audits or investigations
- Misuse of CIPFA branding or logos

By Students:

- Plagiarism or failure to properly reference sources
- Collusion or copying from other learners
- Personation or being impersonated
- Bringing unauthorised items into assessments (e.g., phones, notes)
- Inappropriate or disruptive behaviour during assessments
- Submitting falsified or fabricated work
- Inserting discriminatory, offensive, or obscene material into assessments

Definition of Maladministration

Maladministration refers to any unintentional act, error, or persistent administrative failure that results in non-compliance with CIPFA's operational procedures or quality assurance requirements.

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 within an ATP (e.g., inappropriate use of student records).

Examples of Maladministration (non-exhaustive)

The categories listed below are examples of ATPs and student maladministration. Please note that these examples are not exhaustive and are only intended as guidance to definitions of maladministration:

- Failure to follow CIPFA's student registration or certification procedures
- Late or incorrect learner registrations (including persistent occurrences)
- Inaccurate or premature claims for certification
- Administrative errors in assessment records (e.g., unsigned authentication forms, incorrect marking)
- Unreasonable delays in responding to CIPFA communications or actions
- Unintentional misuse of CIPFA logos or trademarks
- Inadequate maintenance of learner records or auditable certification evidence
- Failure to implement or correctly apply CIPFA's published policies
- Poor quality assurance documentation or tracking
- Misrepresentation of ATP recognition status due to unclear or outdated public-facing information

Identifying malpractice and maladministration

Malpractice or maladministration may be identified by the following activities:

- At ATP level through scheduled quality assurance activity and monitoring
- At CIPFA, through intelligence, complaints or feedback received from ATPs staff, students, whistle blowers, assessors, etc.
- At CIPFA through information from other organisations e.g., evidence or knowledge from Awarding Organisations, Ofqual or other stakeholders

Malpractice/suspected malpractice may be identified by the following persons:

- A CIPFA Assessor
- A CIPFA internal member of staff
- Board or Council member
- ATP staff
- A whistle blower
- A Student
- A Regulator

The use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

It is essential to protect the integrity of assessments and the use of generative AI in student assessment submissions is on the increase. ATPs are advised to put in place some controls to reduce the unauthorised use of AI to generate assessment content that is not the students' own.

Whilst in some circumstances, the use of AI may not always mean that malpractice has occurred in the form of plagiarism, for example, if the generated text, illustration, calculation or image forms part of the research for assessment and the source has been appropriately referenced. It is plagiarism when the generated AI has been submitted within the assessment and submitted as the students' own work when it is not.

CIPFA has created a separate Generative Artificial Intelligence Policy and Guidance for students and ATPs which details our stance on the use of AI within assessment where we consider it constitutes assessment malpractice.

Whistleblowing

CIPFA have an organisation-wide Whistleblowing Policy, however, for the purposes of malpractice, there may be instances when a whistleblower may wish to communicate with CIPFA that malpractice has occurred in relation to Assessments, Assessment processes or suspected wrongdoing within CIPFA, and which have had the intention to affect or defraud valid achievement, results or impact on organisation practices.

When an individual discloses information relating to actual or potential malpractice or the covering up of wrongdoing, such as in the case of malpractice this may be called whistleblowing. CIPFA recognises its duty under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 to ensure that workers who raise a genuine concern are not penalised or disadvantaged for doing so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/whistleblowing> states:

'The wrongdoing disclosed must be in the public interest. Whether it is in the public interest will depend on:

- *The number of people affected*
- *The nature and impact of the wrongdoing*
- *Who the wrongdoer is'*

Generally, this means that the concern must have an impact that is wider than one person.

'As a whistleblower you are protected by law. You should not be treated unfairly or lose your job because you 'blow the whistle'.

We recognise that whistleblowing and questioning the activities of others can be difficult, any allegation or concern relating to malpractice or other wrongdoing should be reported.

If you are unsure if you should report something please contact your Manager, if the concern is about your manager, escalate it to your Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development.

If the concern is about the Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development, you will need to report to the Directorate

However, if you are still unsure or worried about the impact, there is an external organisation that provides free, impartial advice and guidance called Protect www.protect-advice.org.uk

Investigation of malpractice or maladministration

CIPFA may identify suspected malpractice or maladministration through internal processes, routine monitoring, or reporting by staff, assessment associates, learners, Accredited Training Providers (ATPs), or third parties (including whistleblowers).

Where a concern is raised by a third party or whistleblower, CIPFA will take appropriate steps to establish the facts while protecting the identity of the informant if requested and unless legally required to disclose.

External Allegations (e.g. ATPs, ATP staff, students)

Allegations must include, where relevant:

- Name and contact details of the ATP
- Name and CIPFA learner number of the student(s) involved
- Name and role of any ATP staff involved
- Full title and QAN of the qualification or assessment in question
- Date(s) and description of the alleged incident(s)
- Summary of any internal investigation findings (including mitigating circumstances)
- Signed statements from relevant individuals, where available

ATP Responsibilities Before Submission

ATPs must complete an internal investigation prior to escalation to CIPFA. This must include:

- Independent staff conducting the investigation (not involved in delivery or assessment)
- Notification to any individuals suspected of malpractice (including summary of the case and potential consequences)
- A written report and supporting evidence

CIPFA will treat all submissions confidentially and in accordance with data protection and regulatory obligations.

CIPFA-Led Investigation and Response

Upon receipt of a report or allegation, CIPFA will:

- Acknowledge receipt and assess the information
- Decide whether to:
- Take no further action
- Request a formal investigation by the Head of the ATP
- Conduct a direct investigation
- Appoint an independent third party to investigate

Where necessary, CIPFA may:

- Suspend the release of results (individual or cohort level)
- Suspend ATP registration for new learners during the investigation
- Require that learners are permitted to transfer to an alternative ATP
- Notify learners either directly or through the ATP

The ATP will have 10 working days to respond to any request for further information.

Investigation Timelines and Oversight

The primary aim is to determine whether regulations have been breached and, if so, to assess the impact. CIPFA will aim to complete its investigation within 20 working days of receiving a valid report.

The process may include:

- Requesting additional evidence
- Conducting interviews (by phone or in person)
- Temporary reallocation or suspension of involved CIPFA staff, if appropriate

The Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development will oversee the investigation to ensure due process and maintain communication with relevant parties.

Reporting

Where the investigation into the alleged malpractice or maladministration has been carried out by the ATP, a written report must be submitted to CIPFA. This should be prepared by the Assessments Manager or a suitably senior and independent member of staff.

Where the investigation has been conducted by CIPFA, a written report will be compiled by the Responsible Officer (RO).

Each report may include, where applicable:

- A factual account of the circumstances relating to the alleged malpractice or maladministration
- Details of the investigation process and the individuals involved
- Written statements from relevant parties
- Invigilation reports, attendance records, and seating plans
- Evidential material (e.g., unauthorised items, student work, digital logs)
- Any relevant mitigating or extenuating circumstances
- Any other documentation pertinent to the investigation

Decision

A Malpractice and Maladministration Review Panel will be convened to review the investigation findings.

The panel will include:

- The Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development
- The Assessment Manager
- Decisions will be made in accordance with CIPFA's Disciplinary Regulations.

The outcome will be communicated to the ATP within 10 working days of the panel's decision.

If the ATP or learner wishes to appeal the outcome, they must submit their appeal in writing within a further 10 working days.

Appeals should be addressed to the Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development and will be reviewed by a member of the CIPFA Leadership Team who will respond with a final decision within 20 working days.

Regulatory Notification

The Responsible Officer will notify Ofqual of any serious or reportable cases via an Event Notification, in line with the General Conditions of Recognition. Not all cases require regulatory reporting. However, CIPFA retains records of all malpractice and maladministration cases for audit and inspection purposes.

Sanctions

CIPFA will impose sanctions proportionate to the evidence presented and the nature and circumstances of the founded malpractice or maladministration.

The purpose of the sanction is to:

- Address the malpractice or maladministration
- Minimise the risk to the integrity of the assessments for the future
- Ensure the validity of the qualification awarded and that students have reached the required standard
- Maintain public confidence in the delivery and awarding of CIPFA qualifications
- Act as a deterrent to others.

A sanction may be applied to an ATP or member of ATP staff as a consequence of an investigation, or prior to the conclusion of an investigation if deemed necessary by the Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development. In some cases, it will act as a means to restrict an ATP activity and limit any negative effects of the alleged malpractice or maladministration.

ATP sanctions may include, but are not limited to:

- Suspension of ATP approval either temporary or permanent
- Written warning
- Action plan
- Additional monitoring or quality assurance
- Suspension of student registration

Student sanctions may include (but are not limited to):

- Issuance of a formal written warning
- Results being declared null and void
- Partial or full loss of marks for the affected assessment
- Temporary or permanent disqualification from one or more assessments (debarment)

Malpractice appeals

Appeals may be made against decisions and sanctions arising from a malpractice or maladministration investigation and decision. The appellant must clearly and comprehensively establish the grounds for the appeal including provision of supporting evidence.

Such evidence may include:

- Further evidence coming to light that alters the original basis of the decision
- Evidence that the outcome is not in line with specific guidelines, procedures or regulation
- Proof that evidence submitted was incorrect, misinterpreted or not based on the facts of the case.

This must be made formally in writing for the attention of the Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development to qualitycompliance@cipfa.org

Stage 1 – will consist of a review of the case evidence and documentation by the Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development, and Assessment Manager.

Stage 2 – will consist of a panel which will include the Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development and independent representation to review the evidence.

Any appeals must be received by CIPFA within 21 days of the date of the outcome.

Please note that this is different from our appeals against assessment results.

Disclosure

In cases where there could be an Adverse Effect in particular cases involving alleged fraud or serious threat to the integrity of certification, CIPFA is required to report the matter to Ofqual and as relevant to other Awarding Organisations.

During the process of investigation and reporting we may need to access confidential information.

We will keep the information secure and only use it for the purposes of the investigation and in line with relevant data protection legislation.

Disclosure to third parties will only take place if required to do so, for example if required by the Regulators, Police or other relevant legal parties.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

All information received or generated during the investigation of malpractice or maladministration will be treated as confidential and managed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

CIPFA will ensure that:

- Personal data is processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently
- Only relevant and proportionate information is shared with those who need it to fulfil their regulatory or investigatory duties
- Any disclosures to third parties (e.g., Ofqual or legal authorities) will be made only where there is a lawful basis to do so, including where it is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation or to safeguard the integrity of qualifications
- All records of malpractice investigations are retained securely and in accordance with CIPFA's Records Retention Schedule

Individuals involved in malpractice investigations (including whistleblowers, students, and ATP staff) have the right to request access to their personal data under Data Protection Law.

Policy version and owner

Policy owner	Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development
Version	1.2
Update	July 2025
Approval	SMB 5 September 2025
Policy review date	September 2026

Regulatory references.

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition A6: Identification and management of risks
Condition A7: Management of incidents
Condition A8: Malpractice and maladministration
Condition B3: Notification to Ofqual