



Education Workforce Council

Guide to good practice in testing, assessment, examinations and invigilation

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1.0 Introduction

Tests, assessments, examinations and invigilation are an everyday part of life in all phases of education and training. As such, it is likely the vast majority of practitioners will have some kind of involvement during their careers.

Whilst specific responsibilities within such controlled settings are varied and numerous, from opening and storing examination papers, to acting as an assessor, invigilator, responsible officer, to marking coursework or test papers, the overriding objective for those involved is to ensure candidates receive equal and fair treatment so that there can be confidence in the grades and certification awarded. Because of this responsibility, practitioners need to ensure the possibility of allegations being made against them is minimised by following best practice.

This guide is intended to help you do that.

Impact of allegations of malpractice

Tests, assessments and exams, for all learners, are important. GCSEs in particular form a sound basis from which learners can pursue chosen careers, study in further education, follow vocations, and achieve their potential.

Allegations of malpractice can arise for many different reasons, and whilst there can be no assumption a practitioner is always at fault, it goes without saying where learners are thought to have been given an unfair advantage in test, assessment or examination conditions, the implications are broad.

Allegations of this nature can have a significant, negative impact, not only on the individual practitioner involved, but can also delay or jeopardise the educational progress of learners. For example, disruption to test, exam or assessment conditions may result in learners having to re-sit, re-submit coursework, have their work re-moderated meaning, in some situations, they miss out on places in further education or chosen careers. Furthermore, the practitioner involved, if found to be culpable, may have compromised their employment and credibility.

Established malpractice may go on to damage the integrity of the examination body, the employer and employees.

Scrutiny

You should bear in mind any part you play in a test, assessment, examination or invigilation process may well be subject to scrutiny by examination boards, learners, parents, the public, your colleagues, and also regulators such as Qualification Wales.

This being the case, and as a registered person, you must take a personal responsibility for your conduct in these important areas.

2.0 The expectations placed on you as a professional

All Education Workforce Council (EWC) registered practitioners are subject to the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice which sets out the key principles of good conduct and practice for registrants. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Code which can be downloaded from the EWC's website.

The Code makes clear:

'Registrants act with honesty and integrity...and conduct assessment and examination related tasks with integrity.'

2.1 Published Guidance and protocols

(Examination boards / Welsh Government / school or institution)

With any test, assessment, examination or invigilation, there should be some form of specific guidance setting out how these should be conducted by a school, institution or practitioner.

Whilst the Education Workforce Council has no place to provide advice on such guidance, whether you are the responsible officer/Head of Centre, a practitioner invigilating or assessing, you must take a personal responsibility for reading, following and applying the guidance relevant. This includes any amendments to that guidance.

2.2 General principles – protecting yourself

As a practitioner given responsibility in a test, examination or assessment setting:

Familiarise and understand

- Read carefully the guidance relevant to that test, examination or assessment;
- Understand your role;
- Ask questions if you are not clear about what you are expected to do;
- Understand where special conditions apply to candidates. For example, reasonable adjustments, access arrangements and special considerations;
- Understand what to do / who to speak to when problems or unusual events arise.

If you are not given any guidance, ask for it, including any amendments. Don't let ignorance make you vulnerable.

Apply any guidance appropriately

If:

- you make a mistake;
- you forget to apply the guidance in the prescribed way;
- you feel under pressure to go against the guidance;
- something prevents you from applying the guidance as you should; or

- for any other reason, things go wrong,

make it known to your line manager, Examinations Officer, or other such responsible officer as soon as possible.

Sign documents with caution

- Read and understand carefully any document you are asked / expected to sign – take your time;
- Understand why you are asked / expected to sign it – what is your role, what is the purpose of the document, who is the document for? If you are not clear, ask;
- If you are asked to confirm, by signing a document, that you have followed some or all of the examination board guidance, make sure this is the case before signing;
- If you feel you are being encouraged or forced to falsify a document, speak with your line manager, Examinations Officer, or other such responsible officer, or your trade union;
- If for any other reason you feel you cannot, or should not sign any kind of declaration, speak with your line manager, Examinations Officer, or other such responsible officer, or your trade union.

Be vigilant

If you suspect:

- a breach of the test / examination / assessment guidance and/or protocols by colleagues, the school, institution or practitioner;
- plagiarism amongst candidates;
- there is something wrong with the authenticity of coursework;
- candidates have breached test or examination conditions;
- marks or grades appear to have been improved or changed, particularly in relation to coursework; or
- for any other reason, the test, assessment or examination process has been compromised,

make it known to your line manager, Examinations Officer, or other such responsible officer as soon as possible.

If you cannot report it locally for any reason, speak with your trade union first.

If you are not a member of a trade union, you should still try and ask for advice from someone you trust before reporting a suspected issue.

Remember:

- your position as a professional;
- your conduct is your responsibility;
- the importance of maintaining the integrity of the test, examination, assessment and/or invigilation;

- your responsibility to learners.

3.0 Examples of cases investigated by the EWC

The examples below are some of the cases referred to the EWC for investigation relating to alleged malpractice in tests, assessments and examinations. These are illustrations of where practitioners have breached the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice:

- a teacher allowed learners to redraft answers in the National Reading and Numeracy Test examination conditions;
- three school learning support workers gave learners more time to finish standard tests, in breach of guidelines;
- a Head Teacher signed a declaration, knowing the school had breached the examination board guidelines in the National Reading and Numeracy Test;
- a practitioner falsified learners' signatures against coursework;
- a Head Teacher amended upwards examination results, and later forwarded them to the Welsh Government under the guise of being accurate.

4.0 How we can help you further

- The EWC offer presentations which focus on fitness to practise. If you or your employer would like to arrange one in your school or college, please contact (information@ewc.wales);
- The EWC's Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Registrants with the Education Workforce Council, and Information about the EWC's fitness to practise work can be found on its website www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/fitness-to-practiseFitness
- Any queries should be referred to the Fitness to Practise Team at fitnesstopractise@ewc.wales