QA-05 Candidate Malpractice Policy

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1. Purpose

IRM Awarding strives to prevent the occurrence of malpractice in the development, delivery, and award of its qualifications, to safeguard the consistency and integrity of all assessments.

IRM works with consultants, advisers, internal and external assessors and external examiners to maintain rigorous quality assurance and control arrangements, in relation to its qualification assessments. These arrangements, combined with internal and external assessment administrative procedures, ensure that the Candidate Malpractice Policy and Procedures for assessment decisions are accurate and consistent as far as possible, and that opportunities for malpractice are kept to the minimum.

In accordance with Ofqual's condition A8.2, where malpractice is suspected or is alleged and where there are reasonable grounds for that suspicion or allegation, IRM Awarding will promptly take all reasonable steps to establish whether malpractice did occur and to prevent any adverse effect.

2. Scope

This policy is intended for all candidates who undertake IRM qualification assessments.

This Policy explains what is meant by the term malpractice including the different types of candidate behaviour in assessment tasks that could give rise to a malpractice investigation. It also explains the malpractice investigation process, the potential consequences to candidates of malpractice cases, and the rights and process for candidates to appeal an IRM decision following a malpractice investigation.

3. Terminology used

3.1 Assessment

Assessment refers to IRM candidate work that is being assessed (marked). This includes assessments for multiple-choice question (MCQ) examinations and Assignment submissions.

3.2 Candidates

Candidates refers to IRM candidates who undertake IRM assessments including MCQ examinations and Assignment submissions.

3.3 Examinations and Assessment Team

Exams and Assessment Team refers to the IRM's Internal Examinations and Assessment department. This also includes the IRM's internal Examination and Assessment team employees and all assessors/examiners and consultants.

3.4 Malpractice

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'malpractice', including maladministration is "any act, default or practice which is a breach of the regulations that apply to the exam or assessment being taken" (*Joint Council for Qualifications, JCQ).* In other words, failure to follow rules of an examination or assessment.

3.5 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as "unacknowledged copying from, or reproduction of, third party sources or incomplete referencing (including the internet and AI tools)" (*Joint Council for Qualifications, JCQ).*

3.6 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to AI text generation tools. E.G., Grammarly, Anyword, ChatGPT, etc.

4. Authenticity of Candidate work in assessment tasks

Assessment tasks are set to provide candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their own knowledge and skills and are designed to ensure that they have met the required learning outcomes as outlined in the qualification specification.

All assignments produced by candidates MUST be their own individual and independent work. This means ensuring that any final assignment submitted is in their own words and not copied and pasted or sourced from elsewhere, including by the use of AI text generation tools. Any text that is paraphrased, used, or referred to MUST be correctly referenced using the Harvard referencing style.

5. Plagiarism in Assessment Tasks

The IRM adopts the Joint Council for Qualifications' (JCQ) guidance regarding plagiarism which states that "Unacknowledged copying from, or reproduction of, third party sources or incomplete referencing (including the use of internet and AI tools) will be considered malpractice. This also incorporates the direct and unacknowledged translation of foreign language texts into English. Plagiarism violates academic integrity and is also viewed as academic dishonesty. Consequently, the IRM views plagiarism as a serious candidate malpractice and assessment offence.

5.1 The following is considered Plagiarism in Assessment tasks:

- Presenting work or ideas from another source as your own.
- Copying from work/notes provided or submitted by another learner
- Failure to acknowledge sources used in the correct manner and required format.
- Photographing screens of MCQ online exams.
- Using an imposter to complete an assessment on their behalf.
- Falsification or fabrication of assessment evidence.
- False declaration of authenticity when submitting assignments.

6. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of Artificial Intelligence text generation tools is not permitted for a submitted assignment, thesis or research project. This is also in contravention of the Candidate Code of Practice.

All candidate work must be their own.

6.1 Indicators of AI Misuse

JCQ'S (2023) examples of AI misuse include (but are not limited to):

- Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the candidate's own
- Copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content
- Using AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the student's own work, analysis, evaluation or calculations
- Failing to acknowledge use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information
- Incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools
- Submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies.

The following are possible indicators of AI use in assignment, thesis, or research project submissions:

- Inconsistencies in the use of language (e.g. first person and third person text), writing style of candidate, or grammar (incorrect subject-verbs, incorrect pronouns, possessive errors, article and preposition errors, capitalisation, punctuation and spellings).
- Incorrect referencing including (possible 'fake' referencing, references which cannot be verified or no referencing at all).
- Amendments to AI text (changing the wording and/or moving content around which has been generated by AI).
- Lack of use or use of inappropriate out of date diagrams (pictures, graphs, data tables).
- Little or no evidence of critical thinking or development of arguments.
- No cohesion within the work submitted which includes repetition of points.
- Little or no explanation or analysis of points made.

6.2 Other behaviours that will also be regarded as malpractice.

Examples of this includes:

- Misuse or intended misuse of assessment material.
- Attempting to obtain secure assessment material.
- Bribing an invigilator, centre or IRM staff.
- Attempting to Cheat to gain advantage, including contract cheating.
- Failure to follow instructions from an invigilator.
- Disruptive or violent behaviour at the test centre.
- Any form of communication with other learners during an examination at a test centre.
- Collusion by working together with others to complete an assessment that should be completed independently.
- Bringing unauthorised material into an exam room.
- Providing inaccurate or deliberately misleading statements as part of a malpractice investigation.

7. IRM Malpractice Detection Software

All candidate assignments are submitted in Moodle, via a software called Turnitin. This software checks for the originality of candidates' work and provides educators with relevant information to assess if potential plagiarism has occurred. This tool has recently been enhanced to detect AI-generated content or AI-assisted writing. IRM uses this new AI detection feature when considering the authenticity of a candidate's work. IRM will not accept any assignments which are not the candidate's own independent work. When IRM suspects that a candidate has misused AI, it will launch an investigation in line with its malpractice policy.

APPENDIX 1 - IRM Malpractice Investigation Procedure for Assignment Submissions

1. **Introduction**

This procedure is in addition to this current QA-05 IRM Candidate Malpractice Policy. The procedure has been prepared to give specific guidance on the management of investigations into suspected malpractice incidents in assessments. It also sets out the sanctions that IRM may take where instances of malpractice are proven.

Following investigations, the IRM will make judgements on whether it is satisfied that malpractice has occurred after considering all available evidence and information, including information received from candidates.

2. **Scope**

This document is intended for management and quality assurance aspects associated with the investigation of all incidents of suspected malpractice in IRM Qualifications and is consistent with the requirements of the 'Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments: Policies and Procedures,' document published by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

3. **Investigation Process**

A process chart is to be found on the next page.

3.1 Summary of the Investigation Process
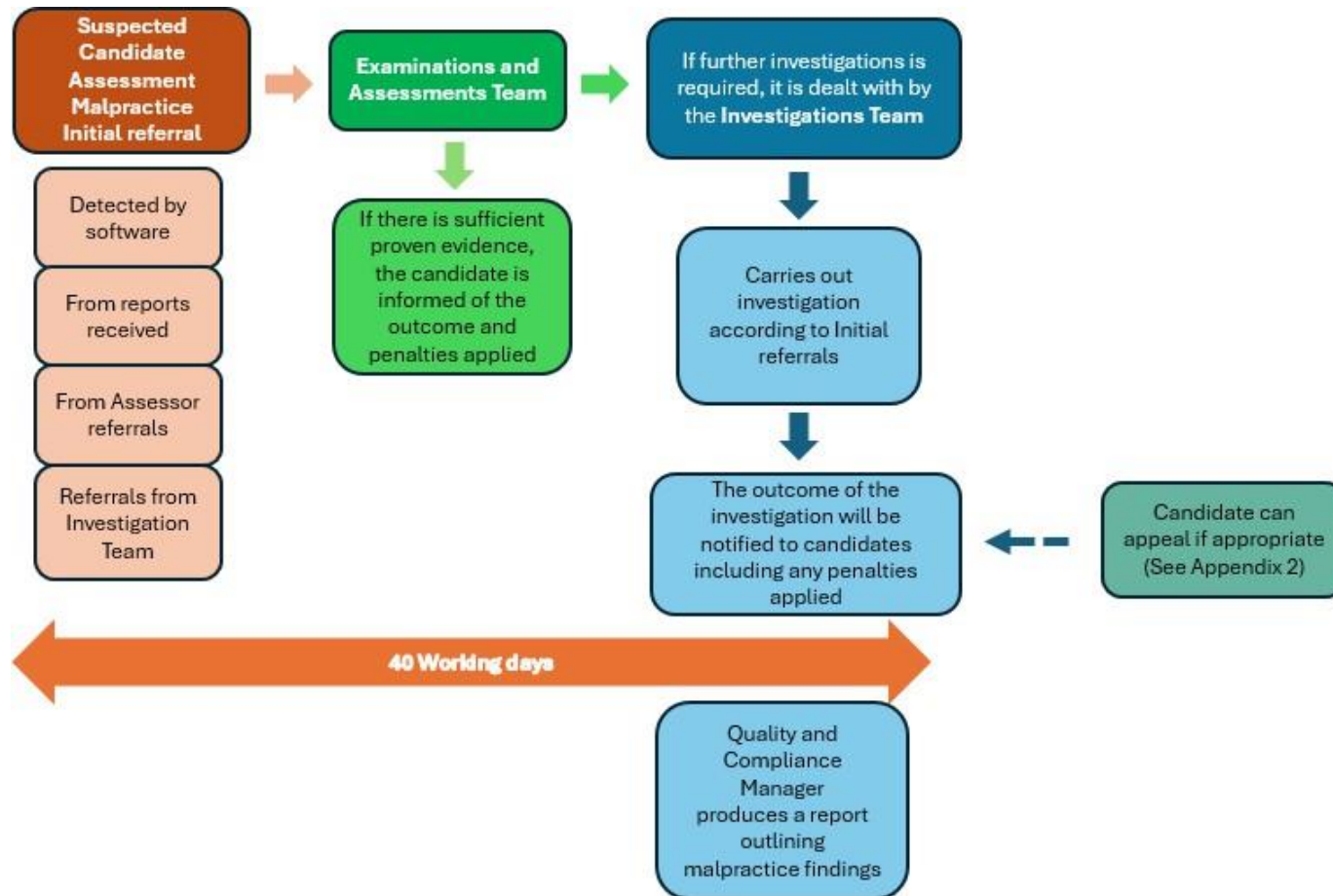
3.2 Initial referral

Initial referral is when a malpractice has been brought to the attention of IRM.

3.2.1 Initial referral of a suspected malpractice incident could arise from, but not limited to any of the following:

- Indications from IRM's use of malpractice detection software systems.
- Referral by Assessors when marking candidate's work.
- Whistleblowing from colleagues, other candidates, or members of the public.
- Reports from examination centres and/or invigilators.

3.2.2 All cases of suspected malpractice are reported to the Head of Exams and Assessment.

3.2.3 Assignments submitted by candidates into the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) are screened through Turnitin. Turnitin results are analysed by the Examinations and Assessment Team to identify potential cases of malpractice.

3.3 If there is sufficient proven evidence of plagiarism without the need for further investigation

3.3.1 If the analysis results show sufficient evidence of suspected malpractice with a high level of indicated similarity score from Turnitin, the relevant assignments will be immediately regarded as proven cases of malpractice, pending any candidate response and any further evidence being provided.

3.4 If further investigation is required

3.4.1 If malpractice system software detection analysis shows sufficient indication of either potential use of AI text generation tools being used or that work may have been plagiarised, these will be referred for further investigation by the Investigation Team which will consist of at least one member of the Quality & Compliance Team.

3.4.2 Cases of malpractice that have been referred or notified by examinations staff or candidates, including by direct referral, complaint or whistleblowing will be reported to the Head of Examinations and Assessment who will initiate an investigation with all required and relevant parties. This could include but is not limited to:

- Carrying out interviews with witnesses, or whistleblowers.
- Obtaining specialist support and advice, including from the IRM Chief Principal Assessor and Principal Assessor or external specialist.
- Requests to review previous or earlier drafts of a Candidate's work.
- Requests for further candidate assessment by Viva-Voce (oral assessment).
- Outcomes from previous individual candidate proven cases of malpractice.

4. Timelines

- Notification letters will be sent to candidates whose assignments are under investigation for suspected malpractice within 5 days from the scheduled release of results.

- Candidates will be invited to provide a written statement to explain the incident from their perspective within 7 working days of receiving notification of the allegation.

- Candidates will be notified of the outcomes of suspected malpractice investigations within 40 working days from the start of the investigation.

- If there is a need for a time extension due to delays in the investigation process, candidates will be notified within the 40-working day outcome period.

5. Conclusion of investigation

5.1 Action and Sanction

The Investigations Team will consider the findings and recommendations from the malpractice investigation. If they are satisfied that a malpractice has occurred, they will determine a course of action that could lead to a sanction for the candidate.

5.2 Final report

On conclusion of the investigation and the notification of any sanctions applied, the Quality and Compliance Manager will produce a report on the findings and outcomes of the malpractice investigations to the IRM Responsible Officer.

6. Sanctions

If the outcome of the investigation leads to sanctions being applied, these will include one or more of the following:

- Written warning.
- Loss of marks.
- Disqualification from the qualification module.
- Disqualification from the whole qualification.
- Barred from IRM assessments for a period of 3 years.

7. Further action

Candidates have the right to appeal against the outcome of a malpractice investigation if they disagree with the penalties applied and any reduction of marks, if they can provide appropriate evidence in support of their appeal. See Appendix 2, Malpractice Appeals Procedure.

APPENDIX 2 – Malpractice Appeals Procedure

1. Candidates found guilty of a malpractice offence have the right to appeal the decision and the penalties imposed. All IRM candidates have the right to appeal against the outcome of a malpractice investigation where they have sufficient grounds to appeal and are able to produce evidence in support of their appeal.

2. Appeals will be accepted in relation to any of the below circumstances where candidates feel they have been adversely affected and that has resulted in penalties being applied:

   - The IRM did not apply its malpractice investigation procedures in an equitable, fair, and consistent way.
   - There is evidence of bias or prejudice against the candidate.
   - There were circumstances affecting the candidate which the IRM malpractice investigation team were not aware of when the outcome of the investigation was decided.
   - There has been interference within the examination setting (at Pearson VUE Test Centre) that may have disadvantaged the candidate.
   - The candidate believes that the penalty imposed is disproportionate to the malpractice offence.

3. Appeals must be submitted within 14 days of a notification of the outcome of the malpractice investigation. All appeals applications must include an explanation on the grounds for the appeal, and all candidate supporting evidence should be presented when the appeal is made. Any further evidence required by the appeals panel will be requested from a candidate during the appeal investigation process.

4. The appeals procedure consists of 2 stages and there is a fee of £85 for each stage, which will be refunded if the appeal is successful.

Stage 1

The appeal will be received and dealt with by member(s) of the IRM Quality and Compliance Team who have not previously been involved in the examination and malpractice review process, or their nominee. When the appeal is received by the IRM Quality and Compliance team, they will consider whether the appeal is made based on one or more of the circumstances given in paragraph 2 above and it has been submitted within the allowed timeframe. If the appeal does not meet these conditions the candidate who made the appeal will be notified in writing within 10 days that the appeal is not eligible for further consideration with the reasons stated.

The Quality and Compliance Team will consist of: The Quality and Compliance Manager and a minimum of one other staff member who has not been involved in the malpractice investigation and its outcome that has led to the appeal.

If there are sufficient grounds for the appeal the IRM, Quality and Compliance Team will consider all presented and any emerging evidence along with the outcome of the malpractice investigation. The Quality and Compliance Team will make the following decision:

- The penalties imposed are upheld.
- The penalties imposed are increased.
- The penalties imposed are decreased.

Stage 2

If the candidate is still not satisfied with the outcome at stage 1 of their appeal, they can further their appeal to stage 2. Appeals at stage 2 are heard by a panel chaired by the Director of Qualifications who is also the IRM Responsible Officer, with at least one other independent and suitably qualified member who has not been involved with the assessment or the administration of assessments and have no personal interest in the decisions under consideration.

The appeal panel may uphold the original decision or overturn it. No further information will be provided.

The Director of Qualifications is responsible for ensuring that all parties affected by decisions on malpractice or maladministration are informed of the outcome of the above processes.

5. Outcomes

It is expected that outcomes of any appeals process are concluded and notified to candidates within 20 working days of the IRM receiving the appeals application. However, under some circumstances this may take longer, for example due to the complexity of the investigation, or where interviews with witnesses may be required. Where there is likely to be a delay in the notification of the result of any appeal, candidates will be informed in writing within the 20-day period which includes the reasons for the delay.

6. Further Guidance

If further guidance is required, please contact IRM Quality and Compliance at, QualityCompliance@theirm.org.