

# Learner Study Conduct Policy



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# 1 Purpose

SFJ Awards expects learners to behave appropriately and conduct their studies according to the regulations.

The majority of learners take pride in completing their studies, take responsibility for their own learning, actively engage with the tasks set out, listen to feedback, attend well, keep to deadlines and take their learning seriously. Nevertheless on occasion some learners may not do so.

This policy sets out SFJ Awards' approach to preventing and managing any form of malpractice or cheating by learners which undermines the credibility of qualifications and genuine learner achievements.

## 2 Definitions

**Malpractice:** SFJ Awards defines malpractice as any activity or practice which deliberately contravenes regulatory requirements and compromises the integrity of the assessment process, the validity of certificates, the credibility of SFJ Awards and public confidence in qualifications.

**Plagiarism:** is a term to describe the action of passing off the work/evidence of another learner as a learner's own original work/evidence. Taking and using another person's thoughts and writing as your own. Plagiarism can occur in all forms of study where you are expected to work independently and produce your own original material.

**Collusion:** is the active cooperation of two or more learners to deceive their assessor(s). You will be guilty of collusion if you knowingly allow any of your work to be obtained by another learner for presentation as if it were that person's own work. If you offer to provide work to another learner to be passed off as their own, you are guilty of collusion.

**Cheating:** is acting dishonestly or unfairly in order to gain an advantage. It may involve using unauthorised assistance with intent to deceive a tutor or other such person who may be assigned to evaluate the learner's work in meeting course and qualification requirements.

## 3 Roles and Responsibilities

### Learners:

- Understand the implications of cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice (defined in section 5)
- Be familiar with your centre's malpractice and maladministration policy(ies)
- Speak to a member of staff at your centre if you have any concerns or questions about cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice
- Promptly report any suspected cases/incidents to Heads of Centre

### Centre Staff:

- Understand the implications of cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice (defined in section 5)

- Be familiar with your centre's malpractice and maladministration policy(ies)
- Be vigilant and report any suspected cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice cases to Heads of Centre immediately
- Assist fully in investigations

#### **Heads of Centre:**

- Have a policy in place for dealing with cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice, compliant with SFJ Awards centre approval criteria
- Ensure all staff and learners understand cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice and the associated consequences
- Monitor centre activity to detect any suspected or actual cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice
- Promptly investigate any suspected or actual cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice using staff independent of the alleged or suspected incident
- Promptly report to SFJ Awards details of any investigations that have take place
- Cooperate fully with SFJ Awards in any further investigation of reported plagiarism, collusion and malpractice

#### **SFJ Awards External Quality Assurers (EQAs):**

- Be vigilant and promptly report any suspected cases of cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice to SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager
- Support centres and provide them with guidance on how to prevent, investigate and deal with alleged or suspected plagiarism, collusion and malpractice
- Limit cases through routine External Quality Assurance activities
- Take into consideration instances of cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice when applying appropriate risk ratings to approved centres

#### **SFJ Awards' Quality and Assessment Manager:**

- Notify Heads of Centre when either SFJ Awards or an external/third party identifies alleged or actual plagiarism, collusion and malpractice
- Manage the centre approval process and the ongoing compliance of approved centres, overseeing the work of the External Quality Assurers (EQAs) to reduce, detect and manage plagiarism, collusion and malpractice
- Examine investigated cases of alleged or actual cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice reported and determine the wider implications of each reported event
- Monitor SFJ Awards approved centres and work with EQAs to apply corrective actions in response to any cheating, plagiarism, collusion and malpractice event which has taken place

- Inform SFJ Awards' Awarding Organisation Manager (Responsible Officer) immediately of any actual or potential Adverse Effects

## 4 Preventing Cheating, Plagiarism, Collusion and Malpractice

SFJ Awards takes any form of malpractice or cheating by learners or anyone involved in the delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance of its qualifications **seriously** and cases may lead to:

- Learners not receiving credit for their work.
- Learners not receiving certificates/having certificates revoked.
- An approved centre's future registrations not being accepted.
- Increased financial costs for the centre (eg through additional chargeable visits).
- Sanctions being applied to the centre.
- Loss of SFJ Awards centre approval.

## 5 Learner Malpractice:

The following are examples of Learner malpractice (*the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only*):

- Cheating
- Plagiarism i.e. submitting work that is not the learner's own work.
- Using a false identity to gain a qualification by proxy.
- Forgery of evidence which is submitted for assessment e.g. forged letters, signatures, certificates etc.
- Misrepresentation of their role in a work-based activity in order to secure evidence of competence.
- Collusion.
- The introduction of unauthorised materials or equipment into the assessment room, e.g. reference materials, calculators or mobile phones.
- The deliberate destruction of another's work.
- The learner not adhering to the terms set out by SFJ Awards, where reasonable adjustments have been granted.

Further information about malpractice and maladministration can be found in SFJ Awards' Malpractice Policy and Maladministration Policy available from the website – [www.sfjawards.com/malpractice](http://www.sfjawards.com/malpractice) and [www.sfjawards.com/maladministration](http://www.sfjawards.com/maladministration)

## 6 Cheating/Plagiarism/Collusion

Whilst it is common and often necessary for learners to learn from the work of others (eg academic staff, fellow learners and published material), it is essential that learners always acknowledge the source of the ideas and information they use in their work that is not their own.

Plagiarism may involve copying from the work of a fellow learner, quoting from learning resources or published text, or downloading material from the internet. In these cases, learners must clearly state their source.

Plagiarism involves not only written work/evidence, but all forms of work/evidence which learners may submit for assessment.

SFJ Awards expects all forms of collusion and plagiarism to be treated seriously by centre staff, and centres should have in place their own process for handling suspected cases of collusion and plagiarism.

There are a variety of reasons why learners plagiarise (*the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only*):

- learner's lack of awareness of the regulations.
- learner's lack of skill in using source material/acknowledging the use the material.
- common use of the internet as a source of ideas/information.
- pressure on the learner to succeed.
- learner not understanding the assessment criteria.
- learner not allowing sufficient time to produce their work/evidence.

### **Preventing cheating, plagiarism and collusion**

Learners must be made aware of their centre's policy(ies) as part of their course induction.

To reduce the possibility for plagiarism, assignments should as far as possible be designed to make copying or using the work of others unhelpful/inappropriate.

Where tests are used as an assessment method, it is good practice to rotate/randomise the test questions for groups and have a bank on tests to draw upon.

Centres may consider implementing an authenticity statement/declaration that learners sign to confirm that the work/evidence is their own work. SFJ Awards provide a suggested template on their website.

### **Detecting and dealing with cheating, plagiarism and collusion**

**Keeping watch:** check learner's work for acknowledgement of sources, varying quality of content, the use of a mixture of tone of voice/vocabulary/spellings/punctuation/presentation.

**Confirming:** if you suspect an assessment has been plagiarised, you must try to locate the source. Speak with the learner and ask them questions about the assignment, to assess whether the work is original and that of the learner.

**Reporting:** if your suspicions are confirmed, the matter should be treated as malpractice and investigated as such.

### **Investigating**

It should not be assumed that because an allegation has been made it is true.

Approved centres will investigate the case following the centre's own published malpractice/maladministration policy to establish whether collusion or plagiarism has taken place. A named person (normally Heads of Centre) will lead the investigation. Details of conducting an investigation can be found in SFJ Awards' malpractice policy.

Where collusion or plagiarism is identified, Heads of Centre must take appropriate action, investigate, and notify SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager when the investigation has been concluded. A copy of the investigation report must be supplied to SFJ Awards.

SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days.

Upon receipt SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager will consider the report, review the details and consider the evidence within 10 working days of receipt. (If the process is expected to take longer, you will be advised of this and the likely amended timescale).

SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager will then decide to either:

- note the incident, action taken by the centre, and take no further action.
- ask Heads of Centre to carry out further investigation/provide further evidence.
- take a decision on the case, which may lead to sanctions being imposed on the centre (outlined in SFJ Awards' Sanctions Policy).
- carry out their own further investigate into the matter.

Heads of Centre will be advised of the outcome of the review by SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager within 5 working days of making our decision. (If the process is expected to take longer, you will be advised of this and the likely amended timescale).

Please refer to SFJ Awards' malpractice policy for details of investigations carried out by SFJ Awards, how SFJ Awards monitor incidents, and under what circumstance SFJ Awards must report incidents to the Qualifications Regulator/other awarding organisations/stakeholders.

## 7 Sanctions and Penalties

Where reports of plagiarism, collusion or malpractice are found to be proven, based on the evidence gathered, SFJ Awards may impose sanctions in line with its sanctions policy (available from the website).

Sanctions and penalties will be proportionate and take into account the transgression and legislation that may impact upon the case including:

- Employment Law
- Health and Safety Legislation
- Equalities and Human Rights Legislation.

When cheating, plagiarism, collusion or malpractice has been proven, sanctions may be imposed on a learner, centre staff member or centre to:

- minimise any risk to the integrity of SFJ Awards qualifications
- ensure that only learners who have achieved the required standard are awarded the qualification
- minimise the potential of the risk recurring
- maintain the confidence of the public in the delivery and awarding of SFJ Awards qualifications

The sanction applied will depend on the transgression, nature and scale of the malpractice. Please refer to SFJ Awards' sanctions policy available from [www.sfjawards.com/sanctions](http://www.sfjawards.com/sanctions)

## 8 Appeals

Learners or centres who wish to appeal against a decision, and the sanctions imposed, should do so using SFJ Awards Enquiries and Appeals Policy which is available on [www.sfjawards.com/appeals](http://www.sfjawards.com/appeals)

Appeals should be made within 20 working days of the sanction being imposed.

## 9 Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Quality and Assessment Manager on a regular basis as part of SFJ Awards' self-evaluation arrangements and revised as necessary in response to lessons learnt, customer feedback, changes in legislation and guidance from the Qualifications Regulators.

Our review of the policy will ensure that SFJ Awards procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied appropriately and equitably.

Policies and formal amendments to policies are approved at the next meeting by the Quality & Standards Committee.

If you have any queries about the content of the policy or you wish to give feedback then please contact SFJ Awards Tel: 01142 841970 or email [info@sfjawards.com](mailto:info@sfjawards.com)

## 10 Location of the Policy

You can download copies of the policy from our website: [www.sfjawards.com/learnerstudyconduct](http://www.sfjawards.com/learnerstudyconduct)