Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

How Maximize Education prevents, reports and investigates cheating and administrative errors in VQA Functional Skills assessments.

Awarding organisation	VQA
Approved by	Christine Jamieson, Head of Centre
Date approved	November 2026
Next review	November 2027

Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

Centre	Maximize Education Ltd, 9 Telford Court, Loansdean, Morpeth, NE61 2DB
Awarding organisation	VQA, formerly TQUK (Functional Skills English and maths, Levels 1 and 2)
Head of Centre	Christine Jamieson, CEO
Centre Contact and Exams Officer	Joe Briddon, General Manager
Date approved	November 2026
Next review	November 2027, or sooner if VQA guidance changes

1. Purpose and scope

This policy explains how Maximize Education prevents, identifies, reports and investigates malpractice and maladministration in VQA assessments. It keeps our results fair, secure and trusted.

It applies to every learner registered for a VQA qualification at our centre, and to all staff involved in teaching, assessment, invigilation, quality assurance or exam administration.

It follows VQA's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, which all staff and learners are made aware of, and the JCQ Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments (English and mathematics), which VQA requires centres to follow when invigilating.

Responsibilities

- **Head of Centre (Christine Jamieson):** overall responsibility for this policy. Makes sure measures are in place to prevent and identify malpractice and that learners' work is their own. Makes sure all suspected malpractice is reported to VQA, oversees investigations and makes sure anyone accused is told their rights. Responds quickly and openly to VQA requests and makes sure staff cooperate fully.
- **Centre Contact and Exams Officer (Joe Briddon):** runs exam administration day to day, keeps exam papers and test logins secure, keeps records, and normally leads any initial investigation.
- **Assessors:** check that each learner's internally assessed work is valid and their own.
- **All staff:** follow this policy and report any concern to the Head of Centre straight away.

2. Definitions

Malpractice is any act, failure to act or practice that breaks the exam regulations or VQA's requirements, or fails to follow set procedures, and that harms learners, damages confidence in results or certificates, or damages the reputation of VQA or the centre. It can be deliberate or accidental.

Maladministration is any activity or practice that breaks the regulations through carelessness or a failure to follow procedures, such as registration errors or poor exam security. In this policy, malpractice covers both.

Examples of learner malpractice

- Copying from, or working with, another learner when not allowed
- Having a phone, notes or other unauthorised items in an exam

- Plagiarism, including using AI tools and presenting the content as their own, or not acknowledging AI use
- Someone else sitting the test for them
- Disruptive behaviour in an exam
- Signing a false declaration that work is their own

Examples of staff malpractice and maladministration

- Giving learners more help than the assessment rules allow
- Changing a learner's work or answers
- Breaching the security of exam papers, onscreen tests or login details
- Giving reasonable adjustments, such as extra time, that have not been approved
- Making false entries in registers, records or declarations
- Not running an exam in line with the JCQ Functional Skills instructions and VQA's requirements
- Failing to report suspected malpractice

3. How we prevent malpractice

- We explain this policy and VQA's policy at induction and before every assessment, in clear language suited to each learner, including those with SEND. Our learner handbook sets out what malpractice is and the sanctions for attempted and actual malpractice.
- We build an open, honest culture so staff and learners feel confident to report concerns.
- Learners sign declarations of authentication where an assessment requires them.
- We confirm each learner's identity when they register and check it again at every test, using the types of ID that VQA accepts.
- Phones, web-enabled devices, bags and notes are stored securely away from the exam room.
- Exam papers and test logins are kept in a locked cabinet in an area not used by staff or students. Only the Head of Centre and Exams Officer have access.
- No Functional Skills tutor invigilates, or receives, stores, moves or prepares test materials. This is a VQA requirement.
- For internally assessed work, such as English Speaking, Listening and Communicating, assessments are recorded, the assessor only facilitates and observes, and the assessor checks the work matches the learner's usual standard. Learners are shown how to acknowledge sources, including AI tools.
- Invigilators are trained and follow the JCQ Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments.
- Reasonable adjustments are agreed and approved before the exam, in line with VQA's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy.
- All staff involved in assessment have the right skills and complete training on this policy each year.

4. Reporting and investigating

1. Anyone who suspects malpractice tells the Head of Centre straight away, in writing where possible.
2. The Head of Centre secures any evidence, such as the learner's work, recordings, notes, devices, seating plans and written statements.

3. The Head of Centre reports it to VQA immediately, by email to compliance@tquk.org or by phone on 0333 358 3344, with supporting evidence. This applies to learner and staff malpractice, and VQA must be told even if we have started our own investigation.
4. Where possible, the report includes: our centre details; the learner's name and registration number; any staff involved; the qualification affected; what happened and when; and the outcome of any initial investigation.
5. **Internally assessed work before the declaration is signed:** we deal with it under this policy and do not accept the work for assessment until the concern is resolved.
6. The person involved is told in writing, as soon as possible, and given the rights listed below.
7. Any initial investigation is carried out by someone competent who has no personal interest in the outcome. It is normally led by the Centre Contact. If the Centre Contact is involved, the Head of Centre or someone she nominates leads it. Interviews follow our safeguarding policy. Learners under 18 can be supported by a member of staff, parent or guardian. Staff and adult learners may bring an appropriate adult or adviser.
8. We cooperate openly and promptly with any VQA investigation, including joint investigations, giving access to documents and the centre. VQA may contact staff or learners directly, and may withhold results while it investigates.
9. If the Head of Centre is involved, the concern is reported directly to VQA.

VQA normally acknowledges a report within 48 hours and aims to complete its investigation within 30 working days.

Rights of the person involved

In line with VQA's policy, and our own practice, anyone accused of malpractice will:

- Be told of the allegation and the evidence that supports it, in writing
- Have the chance to respond before any decision is made, including a written statement
- Have enough time to consider their response, and the chance to seek advice
- Be told that giving knowingly misleading or inaccurate information is itself malpractice
- Know the possible consequences if malpractice is proven
- Be told of their right to appeal, under our internal appeals procedure and VQA's Appeals Policy

Anyone who reports a concern can ask to stay anonymous. We will keep their identity confidential as far as we can, but VQA may have to share it with the police, courts or regulators where the law requires.

5. Sanctions

VQA decides any sanctions that affect results or certificates, under its Sanctions Policy. For learners, these can include a warning, losing marks, disqualification or being barred from VQA qualifications for a period. For the centre, they can include actions with deadlines, extra visits or monitoring, restrictions on staff, extra fees and invalidated certificates. Under VQA's Sanctions Policy, the most serious cases can lead to loss of direct claims status, removal of approval to register learners or claim certificates, or removal of centre recognition.

Where a member of staff is involved, our internal disciplinary procedures may also apply.

6. Appeals

A learner or member of staff can appeal an internal decision by writing to the Head of Centre within 10 working days. The appeal is reviewed by someone who was not involved in the original decision. The full process is set out in our Exam Complaints and Internal Appeals Policy.

Appeals against VQA's decisions follow VQA's Appeals Policy.

7. Records and review

We record every allegation, the evidence, all correspondence with VQA and the outcome. Records are kept securely in a locked cabinet, in line with data protection law, for at least 3 years and until any investigation, appeal or enquiry is complete.

The Head of Centre reviews this policy every year, or sooner if VQA guidance changes, and shares it with all staff.

Approval

	Name	Date
Approved by Head of Centre	Christine Jamieson	
Signed		
Next review		November 2027

References

- VQA, Malpractice and Maladministration Policy (C.P.4)
- VQA, Sanctions Policy
- VQA, Appeals Policy (C.P.1)
- VQA, Functional Skills Qualification in English at Levels 1 and 2, qualification specification
- JCQ, Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments (English and mathematics), 2025 to 2026