

# Malpractice & Maladministration Policy

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 We are committed to inspiring achievement in music. Our qualifications are used by thousands of people to support their musical learning or teaching. Many people also use them when applying to study at further and higher education institutions. It is vital that our qualifications remain a valuable and reliable measure of a candidate's skills and knowledge. We therefore take any form of malpractice or maladministration very seriously.
  
- 1.2 As a UK regulated awarding organisation, we are subject to the conditions of recognition set out by the Office of Qualification and Examination Regulation (Ofqual), Qualifications Wales and the Council for Curriculum Education and Assessment (CCEA). In accordance with condition A8 of these regulations, this policy sets out our approach to managing potential malpractice and maladministration in the delivery of our qualifications.

## **2. What is malpractice?**

- 2.1 We define malpractice as any act which compromises or is an attempt to compromise the assessment process, the integrity of any qualification or the validity of a result or certificate. This also includes any act which damages our reputation or credibility as an awarding organisation.

## **3. What is maladministration?**

- 3.1 We define maladministration as any act which breaches the regulations through a mismanagement of administrative processes, particularly where such a breach could compromise the integrity of a qualification or assessment.

## **4. The scope of this policy**

- 4.1 This document sets out our policy on investigating all forms of malpractice and maladministration. Individual people within the scope of the policy include, but are not limited to:
  - Candidates
  - Applicants
  - Representatives
  - Stewards
  - Invigilators
  
- 4.2 Any acts of misconduct committed by examiners are covered by their Code of Conduct. If you have concerns about the conduct of one of our examiners, please submit a complaint using the contact form on our website.
  
- 4.3 This policy is relevant to all ABRSM qualifications, including Practical Grades, Performance Grades, Music Theory, Diplomas, Certificate for Music Educators, Music Medals and any other qualification we may make available.

## **5. Examples of candidate malpractice**

- 5.1 We expect candidates to conduct themselves in accordance with the Exam Regulations during their assessments (see section 14.0 for relevant references). Failure to comply with these regulations may be considered malpractice. Examples of potential candidate malpractice include:

- Possession of a mobile phone, recording device or other form of electronic device during an exam.
- Possession of unauthorised materials such as prohibited notes or a representation of a piano keyboard in a Music Theory exam.
- Attempting to communicate with other candidates during a written exam.
- Plagiarism or collusion in any written work submitted for assessment.
- Falsifying results documents or certificates
- Failure to follow setup instructions when taking online proctored Music Theory exam
- Impersonation of a candidate
- Editing exam recordings

This is not a complete list. Any other action taken by a candidate with the intention to gain undue advantage or which compromises, or may compromise, the integrity of a qualification may be considered malpractice.

## **6. Examples of applicant, ABRSM exam centre or visit malpractice and maladministration**

6.1 We expect applicants and those facilitating ABRSM exam centres or visits to comply with the terms and conditions of their agreement with us and to act in a way which promotes and protects the integrity of ABRSM qualifications. Failure to do this may be considered malpractice. Examples of potential ABRSM exam centre, visit or applicant malpractice include:

- Breaching the security of a written exam, by making the contents of the paper available outside the exam
- Falsifying assessment material and records
- Providing inappropriate assistance to candidates

6.2 We also expect applicants, ABRSM exam centres and visits to administer qualifications in accordance with our regulations. Failure to do so may be considered maladministration. Examples include:

- Failing to submit supporting evidence for a reasonable adjustment request.
- Introducing unauthorised material into the exam room
- Telling a candidate to use an off-syllabus piece for their exam

6.3 These are not complete lists. Any other action taken by an applicant, or individuals at ABRSM exam centres or visits which is intended to or may compromise the integrity of ABRSM qualifications may be considered malpractice.

## **7. Reporting concerns**

7.1 We should be notified of any instance of suspected malpractice. This information will normally be reported by the chief invigilator, steward or examiner, although anyone concerned about potential malpractice (from now on in this document called “the source”) should report this to us.

7.2 It is important to notify us if you are concerned that malpractice may be occurring during the delivery of our exams and assessments. If you are a teacher at a school where our exams are taking place, we advise you to report the matter to your school's senior management team in the first instance.

7.3 You can contact us directly, in confidence, to report your concerns. If you wish to remain anonymous, we will take all reasonable steps to prevent the accused party from being able to identify you, unless we are legally obliged to release this information. However, please be aware that in order to investigate any allegations of potential malpractice, we must present those allegations to the accused individual, along with any evidence against them.

7.4 As the source, you should provide as much detail as possible about the incident, most importantly:

- the name of the person accused of malpractice
- the date, time, location and title of the exam affected
- the nature of the incident and any supporting evidence (such as invigilator and candidate statements).

This information will allow us to take the matter forward.

## 8. Investigation process

8.1 An investigating officer will review the allegations, decide if there may be a case to answer, and if so seek to collect evidence. All information will be reviewed objectively to determine whether there is any evidence that malpractice has occurred. Investigators must prove on the balance of probability whether malpractice has occurred.

8.2 If they have not already provided a response, the accused person will be asked to respond to the allegations of potential malpractice and any supporting evidence.

8.3 A decision will be made on the outcome of the case based on all the available evidence. Where appropriate we will apply sanctions to those who have committed malpractice. The sanctions issued will reflect the severity of the case.

8.4 All determinations are confidential and will only be shared with those for whom it is directly relevant, namely the person accused of malpractice.

## 9. Possible outcomes

9.1 This section includes examples of penalties and sanctions which could be applied as a result of a malpractice investigation. Other penalties or sanctions may be applied where appropriate.

9.2 Types of penalties for candidates

- **Warning:** We will warn candidates that further penalties will be applied if the offence is repeated within a set period of time.
- **Loss of marks:** We will deduct marks either from a section of the exam or from the total mark, depending on the severity of the case.
- **Disqualification:** We will not issue the result and candidates will not receive a certificate for the affected assessment.

### 9.3 Types of sanctions for applicants/ABRSM exam centre or visits

- **Warning:** We will warn ABRSM exam centres, visits or applicants that further sanctions will be applied if the offence is repeated within a set period of time.
- **Loss of right to enter candidates or approval to run ABRSM exams:** We will no longer allow the applicant to enter candidates for, or run, any ABRSM exams. This sanction may be imposed for a set period of time, or permanently.

9.4 In accordance with General Condition of Recognition A8.7(b), we may report the details of incidents of malpractice to the regulators, Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA, and may share this information with other awarding organisations and/or government authorities where appropriate.

## 10. Adverse effects

- 10.1 We will ensure we take all reasonable steps to prevent any potential adverse effects which result from an instance of malpractice.
- 10.2 In accordance with condition B3, where an incident has resulted in or may result in an adverse effect, then we will report the incident to the relevant regulatory authorities.

## 11. Appeals

- 11.1 The accused has the right to appeal any decision made against them following a malpractice investigation. If this is a candidate entered by an applicant, then the appeal will need to be submitted via the applicant. All appeals must be submitted in writing within 14 days of the date the determination was issued. We may not consider appeals received after this time. The accused should clearly state the grounds for their appeal and provide any supporting evidence.

## 12. Independent Review

- 12.1 If following an appeal the person accused of malpractice believes that the outcome of the investigation was incorrect or disproportionate, they may pay for an independent review of the case by someone with no connection to ABRSM. The independent review will look at the correctness of the application of ABRSM's malpractice and maladministration policy and investigation procedure. If the independent review is upheld, the review fee will be refunded.
- 12.2 Requests for an independent review must be made in writing to the Chief Executive, and must be done within 14 days of receiving the appeal outcome.

## 13. Contact

- 13.1 Direct reporting of concerns, submitting an appeal or requesting an independent review can be done to the following addresses:
- 13.1.1 By email: [qualityandcompliance@abrsm.ac.uk](mailto:qualityandcompliance@abrsm.ac.uk)
- 13.1.2 By post: Quality and Compliance Officer  
4 London Wall Place  
London  
EC2Y 5AU

## **14. References**

- 14.1 For further information about how exams should be conducted, please see the current Exam Regulations on our website: <https://gb.abrsm.org/en/our-exams/information-and-regulations/>

## **15. Definitions**

- 15.1 This section provides a definition of some key terms, not defined elsewhere in the policy. These definitions relate to this document, and may differ from definitions used by other awarding organisations.

### **Applicant**

An applicant is an individual who has entered candidates for ABRSM qualifications.

### **ABRSM exam centre**

This is an exam venue set up and run by an ABRSM Representative. The representative is responsible for the administration of exams. Any applicant can make entries at these exam venues.

### **Candidate**

A candidate is an individual who has completed or is entered to complete an ABRSM qualification.

### **Invigilator**

An invigilator is an individual responsible for supporting the delivery of written exams in accordance with ABRSM regulations, by greeting candidates and supervising the completion of exams.

### **Penalty**

In this document, a penalty is a change in a candidate's marks or certification following the finding that malpractice has occurred. Penalties can also include warnings and exclusions from taking ABRSM exams.

### **Representative**

A representative is an individual who represents ABRSM in a local area and is responsible for running exams at an ABRSM exam centre. In this document, this term relates to all types of representatives in all regions, both in the UK and elsewhere.

### **Sanction**

In this document, a sanction is applied to applicants, ABRSM exam centre or visits (as defined above). Sanctions may lead to a restriction of access to ABRSM services including a restriction on making exam entries or delivering exams and assessments. Sanctions can also include warnings.

### **Steward**

A steward is an individual responsible for supporting the delivery of practical exams in accordance with ABRSM regulations, by greeting candidates and ensuring the smooth running of exam appointments as scheduled.

### **Visit**

This is an exam venue set up and run by an applicant (visit organiser). The visit organiser is responsible for the administration of exams. Only applicants authorised by the visit organiser may enter candidates at these exam venues. Special visits, which are held outside of the normal exam session, are included in this definition.