

Exemplars – Policies & Procedures

The following are examples of the policies and procedures BCS expect Centres to have in place.

Please use these templates as required to form the basis of your policies and procedures. Amend them to reflect what happens within your centre.

Quality Assurance Procedure.....	1
Equal Opportunities Policy	2
Learner Appeals Procedures.....	3
Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy	6
Complaints Policy	8
Malpractice & Maladministration Policy	9

Quality Assurance Procedure

The minimum requirement for a Centre's Quality Assurance procedure is detailed below:

- The Centre is committed to Quality Assurance and believes it is an integral part of the Centre's processes.
- The focus of the Centre is on Learners with the provision of relevant and flexible quality training programmes and assessment to suit their needs and lifestyles.
- The provision is regularly monitored and reviewed by your named quality assurance representative.
- An Internal Verification process is in place to ensure that consistent testing and assessment standards are maintained by cross-marking.
- Internal Verification is carried out on an on-going basis.
- All cases of borderline achievement are Internally Verified.
- At least 10% of other assessments are checked across all markers and modules.
- Where a new marker is assessing, all work is double marked until the Centre Manager is satisfied with the standard.
- All new invigilators are required to be observed during the first six months and annually thereafter to ensure assessment regulations are being followed.
- Existing invigilators should be observed conducting an assessment at least once a year.
- Internal Verification is recorded on Learner work and records and on central recording systems.
- Information from the awarding body is disseminated to all members of staff involved in assessing.
- The organisation's policy for Equal Opportunities is followed and monitored.

Equal Opportunities Policy

The minimum requirement for a Centre's Equal Opportunities policy is detailed below:

- The policy must set out its purpose, who it is intended for, who owns it and when it will be reviewed.
- The Centre is committed to seeking equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of race, gender, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, age, class or disability.
- The Centre actively seeks to demonstrate this commitment by adopting policies, codes of practice and action plans to combat discrimination in any form.
- Staff and students are required to reflect their commitment to equality of opportunities and anti-discriminatory practices.
- The Centre will promote equality of opportunity for all students and staff by:
 - Demonstrating opposition to all forms of discrimination in every aspect of its operations
 - Identifying and removing practices and procedures which unfairly discriminate
 - Increasing awareness and positive attitudes at all levels in the centre toward people experiencing discrimination
 - Creating a welcoming atmosphere for all students, staff and visitors
 - Monitoring all operations to ensure no form of discrimination or harassment is taking place
 - Provision will be made for Learners who require reasonable adjustments to be made by providing suitable assessment locations and technical aids where appropriate.

Learner Appeals Procedures

The minimum requirement for a Centre's Learner Appeals procedure is detailed below:

- The procedure must set out the purpose of the procedure, who it's intended for, who owns it and when it will be reviewed.
- The procedure is required to dovetail into the BCS Appeals procedure that is published on the Approved Centre Forum.

For Manual Marking the BCS requirements are:

- Learners who are unhappy with any aspect of the assessment and award process should first discuss the problem with their Centre Representative or the Centre Manager within 5 days of receiving their result
- The reasons for dissatisfaction must be made clear by Learner at this time
- The Centre will keep a record of such discussion together with date and outcome
- Where necessary the 1st marker will be instructed to re-mark, and the 2nd marker will also be instructed to mark or re-mark
- It should be noted that if the Learner was borderline double marking should already have been undertaken
- If this does not provide satisfaction the Learner may raise a formal appeal
- Appeals will only be accepted if made in writing (not e-mail) to the Centre Manager within 10 days of receiving their result, outlining clearly the circumstance of the appeal
- The 1st and 2nd markers will re-mark again, or consider if there are any aspects that should be taken into account in the Learners performance
- In some circumstances the Learner may be offered a free re-test (e.g. hardware or software problems)
- If this is not the case and the result remains unchanged and the Centre Manager is unable to resolve the impasse then the Learner must write to *named representative* (within 5 days of receiving the 3rd result) who will act as an independent arbiter)
- If a Learner is not able to resolve an appeal at the approved centre then he/she has the right to appeal to BCS. This may be done via the Centre Manager or direct to the BCS Quality Team in writing. Learner appeals must be made to BCS within 60 days of the date of the assessment together with the appeal fee. This fee will be refunded if the Learner's result improves following the appeal. The address will be supplied on request.
- BCS will acknowledge receipt of the appeal and advise the Learner or centre of the timescale for a decision.
- The BCS Representative will investigate the circumstances of the appeal and make a report to the appeals panel. In very exceptional cases, the appeals panel may request the Centre Manager, possibly accompanied by the Learner, to attend a meeting of the panel to provide further explanation of the circumstances of the appeal.
- Appeals panel decisions will be given in writing to the Centre Manager and the Learner and are final

For Automated Assessment the BCS requirements are:

- Learners who are unhappy with any aspect of the assessment process should first discuss the problem with their Centre Representative or the Centre Manager or representative within 5 working days of receiving their result
- The Learner must make the reasons clear at this time
- Assessments are undertaken using automated testing software which has been approved by the ECDL Foundation. In the event of a Learner raising a complaint the assessment report that will have been produced by the system will be fully discussed with the Learner
- An action plan will be agreed and a further assessment date scheduled. In some circumstances the Learner may be offered a free re-test (e.g. if there had been hardware or software problems)
- If the Learner is unhappy with the decision of the Centre Manager the Learner must write to the named representative within 5 working days who will fully review the complaint and attempt to find a solution
- The Centre will keep a written record of each stage of the process with dates and outcomes
- If a Learner is not able to resolve an appeal at the approved centre then he/she has the right to appeal to BCS. This may be done via the Centre Manager or direct to the BCS Quality Team in writing. Learner appeals must be made to BCS within 90 days of the date of the assessment together with the appeal fee. This fee will be refunded if the Learner's result improves following the appeal. The address will be supplied on request.
- BCS will acknowledge receipt of the appeal and advise the Learner or centre of the timescale for a decision.
- The BCS Representative will investigate the circumstances of the appeal and make a report to the appeals panel. In very exceptional cases, the appeals panel may request the Centre Manager possibly accompanied by the Learner, to attend a meeting of the panel to provide further explanation of the circumstances of the appeal
- Appeals panel decisions will be given in writing to the Centre Manager and the Learner and are final

For Evidence Based Assessment the BCS requirements are:

During any stage of the Appeals Procedure the Learner is entitled to be represented or accompanied, should they wish.

All Learners who are being assessed by an Approved Centre Assessor have the right to appeal if they disagree with an assessment decision. In the event of a dispute the following stages should be followed:

Stage 1

The Learner should appeal in writing to the Assessor clearly stating their reasons for disagreement and the evidence in the portfolio which the Learner believes meets the competence requirements of the knowledge and understanding and skills and techniques. The Assessor will meet with the Learner within 10 working days and go through the assessment process, clearly explaining the outcome. The Assessor will confirm the outcome in writing to the Learner.

Stage 2

Learners who are not satisfied with the outcome from Stage 1 may then appeal in writing to the Internal Verifier. The Internal Verifier will meet with the Learner and the Assessor within 10 working days and will confirm the outcome in writing to the Learner.

Stage 3

Learners who are not satisfied with the outcome after Stage 2 and have exhausted all of the internal appeals procedures may then appeal in writing to BCS (the Awarding Body). At this point the Awarding Body's Appeals Procedure will be followed. Centre will be requested to provide reports from Stages 1 and 2.

Learner appeals must be made to BCS within 90 days of the date of the assessment together with the appeal fee. This fee will be refunded if the Learner's result improves following the appeal.

BCS will acknowledge receipt of the appeal and advise the Learner or Centre of the timescale for a decision.

The BCS Representative will investigate the circumstances of the appeal and make a report to the appeals panel. In very exceptional cases, the appeals panel may request the Centre Manager, possibly accompanied by the Learner, to attend a meeting of the panel to provide further explanation of the circumstances of the appeal. Appeals panel decisions will be given in writing to the Centre Manager and the Learner and are final.

If the decision affects other results, appropriate steps will be taken to protect the interests of all Learners and the integrity of the qualification.

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

The minimum requirement for a Centre's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy is detailed below:

- The policy must set out its purpose, who it is intended for, who owns it and when it will be reviewed.

Definition of reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation. It is made to an assessment for a qualification to enable a disadvantaged learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding of the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the integrity of what needs to be assessed, but may involve:

- changing usual assessment arrangements, for example allowing a learner extra time to complete the assessment activity
- adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille
- providing assistance during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader
- re-organising the assessment room, such as removing visual stimuli for an autistic learner
- changing the assessment method, for example from a written assessment to a spoken assessment
- using assistive technology, such as screen reading or voice activated software
- providing the mechanism to have different colour backgrounds to screens for onscreen assessments or asking for permission for copying to different coloured paper for paper-based assessments
- providing and allowing different coloured transparencies with which to view assessment papers

Reasonable adjustments are approved or set in place before the assessment activity takes place; they constitute an arrangement to give the learner access to the programme. The use of a reasonable adjustment will not be taken into consideration during the assessment of a learner's work.

BCS and centres are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, cost implications and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. Other factors, such as the need to maintain competence standards and health and safety, will also be taken into consideration.

Definition of special considerations

Special consideration can be applied after an assessment if there was a reason the learner may have been disadvantaged during the assessment.

For example, special consideration could apply to a learner who has temporarily experienced:

- an illness or injury
- some other event outside of their control

And which has had, or is likely to have had, a material effect on that learner's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment.

Special consideration should not give the learner an unfair advantage, nor should its use cause the user of the certificate to be misled regarding a learner's achievements. The learner's result must reflect his / her achievement in the assessment and not necessarily his / her potential ability.

Special consideration, if successful, may result in a small post-assessment adjustment to the mark of the learner. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances and reflect the difficulty faced by the learner.

Centres should note that

- where an assessment requires the learner to demonstrate practical competence or where criteria have to be met fully, or in the case of qualifications that confer a License to Practice, it may not be possible to apply special consideration.
- in some circumstances, for example for on-demand assessments, it may be more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date.

Principles of making reasonable adjustments

These principles should be followed when making decisions about a learner's need for adjustments to assessment:

- should not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification
- should not give the learners an unfair advantage
- should reflect the learner's normal way of working
- should be based on the individual need of the learner

Complaints Policy

The minimum requirement for a Centre's complaints policy is detailed below:

- The policy must set out its purpose, who it is intended for, who owns it and when it will be reviewed.

How a complaint is made

- Who can make a complaint
- Who the complaint should be made to
- Method of raising a complaint
- What details are required

How a complaint is handled

- Timescales for managing the complaint – from acknowledgement to resolution
- Methods of investigation
- Methods of response
- Who is responsible for managing the complaint

Appeal against a decision following a complaint

- Steps for appeal against an outcome of the complaint

Malpractice & Maladministration Policy

The minimum requirement for a Centre's Malpractice and Maladministration policy is detailed below:

- The policy must set out its purpose, who it is intended for, who owns it and when it will be reviewed.
- Timescales for conducting internal investigations
- A statement that the centre intend to co-operate fully with any Awarding Organisation or regulator investigation. Supplying timely, accurate and full information.

Centre's & associated third party responsibility

It is important that anyone involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of BCS qualifications, and learners, are fully aware of the contents of the policy and that arrangements are in place to prevent and investigate instances of malpractice and maladministration.

Malpractice and maladministration is defined as:

Definition of Malpractice

Malpractice is essentially any activity or practice which deliberately contravenes regulations and compromises the integrity of the internal or external assessment process and/or the validity of certificates. It covers any deliberate actions, neglect, default or other practice that compromises, or could compromise:

- the assessment process
- the integrity of a regulated qualification
- the validity of a result or certificate
- the reputation and credibility of BCS
- the qualification or the wider qualifications community.

Malpractice may include a range of issues from the failure to maintain appropriate records or systems to the deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates.

For the purpose of this policy this term also covers misconduct and forms of unnecessary discrimination or bias towards certain or groups of learners.

Definition of Maladministration

Maladministration is essentially any activity or practice which results in non-compliance with administrative regulations and requirements and includes the application of persistent mistakes or poor administration (e.g. within a centre, inappropriate learner records).

Process for reporting an event of malpractice or maladministration

Anybody who identifies or is made aware of suspected or actual cases of malpractice or maladministration at any time **must immediately notify BCS**.

If a centre has conducted an initial investigation prior to formally notifying BCS, the centre should ensure that staff involved in the initial investigation are competent and have no personal interest in the outcome of the investigation. However, it is important to note that in all instances the centre must immediately notify BCS if malpractice is suspected or maladministration has occurred as BCS have a responsibility to the regulatory authorities to ensure that all investigations are carried out rigorously and effectively.

In all cases of suspected malpractice and maladministration reported, BCS will protect the identity of the 'informant' in accordance with our duty of confidentiality and/or any other legal duty.