

CIPFA Assessment Offences Investigation Policy and Process

This process applies from the December 23 assessments

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Purpose

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) is the global professional body for public finance professionals and recognises practitioners at every level, from those starting out in their career to those innovating and leading the profession. CIPFA organises, sets and runs professional examinations to enable our members to demonstrate high levels of competence in the field of public finance.

This document forms part of the regulatory structure intended to support the integrity of the assessments and reputation of our members and the organisation and ensure the value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.

Scope

This document sets out the process that CIPFA will follow in relation to Student members (Students) who have committed, or are suspected of committing an Assessment Offence whilst undertaking or preparing to undertake CIPFA examinations.

This includes all levels of qualification, examinations and End Point Assessments operated by CIPFA. This policy and process addresses reporting suspected malpractice, the role of the Assessment Offence Assessor (Assessment and Compliance Manager), Head of Qualifications and Membership, Examinations Panel and Appeals Committee, and the penalties which may be imposed if allegations of malpractice are proven.

Depending on the severity of the Assessment Offence, once assessed, by the Assessment Offence Assessor, and Head of Qualifications and Membership with regard to the professional integrity of the Student, the case may then be referred to the Disciplinary Committee by the Examination Panel. At this stage the CIPFA Disciplinary Regulations take precedence over this process.

This process is intended to operate in accordance with the provisions of the Royal Charter and Bye-Law 23.

All Students are covered by this policy and process.

Principles and Definitions

Principles

Assessment Offences includes cheating or other types of academic malpractice. The determination of whether cheating, plagiarism or other form of Assessment Offence has occurred is a matter for an Examinations Panel to consider.

The facts must be established before an Examinations Panel can consider the effect of the alleged incident on a Student's performance.

An allegation of an Assessment Offence is not the same as proof of the incident. Allegations of an Assessment Offence will be investigated with full regard to principles of equity and fairness.

Once the facts have been established, it is then for the Assessment Offence Assessor, Head of Qualifications and Membership, Examinations Panel and Appeals Committee (if the latter is instigated by the Student) to judge the seriousness of the case and to exercise discretion accordingly, having regard to organisational precedent where appropriate.

Definitions

For the purpose of this document 'Assessment' includes all forms of assessment, including examinations, interviews, oral examinations, End Point Assessments, and formal workplace assessments.

'Student' is any student undertaking, or preparing to undertake, an Assessment.

Assessment Offence means any act or omission, attempted or actual, which:

- breaches the CIPFA Assessment Regulations and/or
- compromises, attempts to compromise or may compromise the integrity of the Assessment, and the validity of the result for one or more Students
- prejudices or otherwise damages the authority, credibility or reputation of CIPFA.

Examples of Assessment Offences include, but are not limited to:

- Engaging in activities which undermine the integrity of the Assessment
- Refusing to comply with an Invigilator's instructions, either written or verbal
- Failing to produce individual and original work for the Assessment
- Providing identical extracts of information from the workbooks
- Impersonating a student
- Arranging to be impersonated by another individual for the Assessment
- Providing false identification to an Invigilator
- Obtaining, or attempting to obtain confidential Assessment materials prior to, or during, the Assessment
- Colluding or communicating, or attempting to collude or communicate, with another student during an Assessment
- Accessing external resources, in any format, during an Assessment
- Being in possession of an unauthorised device to access the internet or receive communications (e.g., mobile phone, tablet computer, smart watch or similar device) during an Assessment
- Bringing a pre-prepared response into an Assessment
- Recording, in any format, an Assessment without explicit pre-arranged permission from CIPFA
- Behaving in a disruptive manner during an Assessment
- Attempting to influence, incentivise or threaten an Invigilator, Examiner, or any other member of CIPFA in order to obtain preferential treatment or enhanced Assessment results
- Altering official documentation without permission

Reporting an Assessment Offence

Invigilator Reporting process

In the event of a suspected Assessment Offence, the Invigilator will need to record full details of the incident, including the student's number, time of the incident and details of the alleged Assessment Offence to the Assessment Offence Assessor who will initiate the investigation process.

Fellow Student Reporting process

In the event a fellow student reports a suspected Assessment Offence to the Invigilator, the Invigilator will need to record full details of the incident, including the (allegedly) offending student's number and time of the incident, on the Invigilator's Report. The report should include the reporting student's number, but this detail will not be shared with the alleged offender.

In the event a fellow student reports a suspected Assessment Offence directly to CIPFA, the report should be passed immediately to the Assessment Offence Assessor and should include full details, location and time of the incident, including the (allegedly) offending student's name and number (where known). The reporting student's number should be recorded but this detail will not be shared with the alleged offender.

Marker Reporting process

In the event of a suspected Assessment Offence, the Marker will need to record details on the script of the incident.

The Marker should provide detailed information of the alleged Assessment Offence(s), to the Assessment Offence Assessor who will initiate the investigation process. The information should explain the nature of the alleged assessment, highlight any areas that are relevant on the examination script and provide references to other sources that relate to the Offence.

Investigation of Assessment Offence(s)

Role of the Assessment Offence Assessor

The Role of the Assessment Offence Assessor will typically be fulfilled by the Assessment and Compliance Manager, although the role may be delegated from time to time.

The Assessment Offence Assessor will be responsible for receiving and recording all allegations of Assessment Offences, through Invigilator's Reports, direct reports or any other means.

The Assessment Offence Assessor will commence investigation of the allegation(s). This investigation will involve collating and assessing any materials provided including, but not limited to, Invigilator reports, fellow student reports, witness statements, online assessment records, online proctoring reports, screen grabs, and any other supporting evidence.

The Assessment Offence Assessor will aim to conclude the investigation and present the findings and recommendation for action within 20 working days of formal receipt of the allegation(s).

Any results pending as a result of investigation will be withheld until the investigation outcomes are complete.

Students are able to continue with their studies whilst an investigation is underway.

Where it is appropriate to do so, the Assessment Offence Assessor may notify Students of any allegations made against them but will not divulge the identity or identities of the initial reporter(s).

The Assessment Offence Assessor will notify the student of the allegation on receipt of a decision from the Examinations Panel and they will be given the opportunity to appeal any decision made at the appropriate time in the process. At this stage the student will be made aware that full details of the process are available on the CIPFA website.

The Assessment Offence Assessor will inform the Student of the process of investigation and where to find full details of this process on the CIPFA website.

Investigation outcome

Having considered all available evidence, the Assessment Offence Assessor will present the findings and a recommendation for action to the Head of Qualifications and Membership.

Possible recommendations for action include:

- a. Allegation disproved – no action required
- b. Allegation upheld – Refer to the Examinations Panel for investigation and potential disciplinary action

The Head of Qualifications and Membership will consider the findings and recommendation of the Assessment Offence Assessor and will authorise one of the above decisions,

In the event of the decision of *b.* above, the Offence will be referred to the Examinations Panel to make one or more of the following decisions:

- i. Allegation disproved – no action required
- ii. Allegation upheld – Student required to retake Assessment at next available opportunity
- iii. Allegation upheld – Student is awarded a mark of zero
- iv. Allegation upheld – Student is awarded a reduction of marks
- v. Allegation upheld – Student suspended for a period not exceeding six months
- vi. Allegation upheld – Student to be referred to the Disciplinary Scheme

In the event of the decision of *ii. iii., iv or v* above, the Assessment Offence Assessor will notify the Student with immediate effect on result release day, annotate the Student's record accordingly and formally record the decision at the next available Examinations Panel to enable a progression decision to be made.

In the event of the decision of *vi.* above, the Assessment Offence Assessor will submit the findings and evidence of the investigation to the Disciplinary Committee and notify the Student of the decision when on result release day. At this stage the CIPFA Disciplinary Regulations take effect and there will be no further recourse to this document.

The Head of Qualifications and Membership and the Examinations Panel will be notified of the outcome once the Disciplinary Committee has fully concluded the Disciplinary process.

Appeals

Before submitting an appeal, candidates are encouraged to contact CIPFA's Assessment and Compliance team for an informal check as to whether they meet the criteria for an appeal.

Students are entitled to appeal any decision reached as of *ii. iii., iv or v* above. In the event of the decision of *iv.* above, the Student will be required to abide by the Disciplinary Regulations and will have no further recourse to this document.

Students must be able to provide clear evidence as to how they believe that the decision against which they are appealing meets **at least one** of the following criteria:

1. The decision was biased or discriminatory
2. Relevant information received by the Assessment Offence Assessor had not been taken into consideration

3. Substantial procedural irregularity

It is the responsibility of the Student to provide the Assessment Offence Assessor with clear evidence that at least one of the grounds listed in 1-3 above is valid.

Students considering an appeal should take note that disagreement with the decision of the Assessment Offence Assessor or Head of Qualifications and Membership, without providing clear evidence, does not give grounds for appeal.

Appeals will only be considered on the grounds listed in 1-3 above.

Appeals, along with any evidence submitted, must be received by the Assessment Offence Assessor within 20 working days of notification of the decision made as in *i*, *ii*, *iii*. above.

Appeals Process Stage 1

The Appeal Form should be completed and submitted, along with any evidence, to the Assessment and Compliance Manager via the online submission tool on the CIPFA website.

The Assessment and Compliance Manager will:

- i. Check whether the required criteria for an appeal are met
- ii. Acknowledge receipt of the appeal and advise the Student of the next steps within five working days of the deadline for submitting the appeal

Provided at least one of the criteria for appeal, as in 1-3 above, are met, the Assessment and Compliance Manager will forward the appeal to the Head of Qualifications and Membership to commence Stage 2 of the Appeal Process.

Appeals Process Stage 2

The Head of Qualifications and Membership will undertake a full investigation into the grounds for appeal. This investigation will consider any further evidence provided and could include, but not be restricted to, interviews with the following people:

- Appellant
- Appellant's Employer
- Examiner
- Moderator
- Invigilator
- CIPFA Education and Membership staff members
- Any external 3rd party deemed appropriate

Once the investigation has been completed, the Head of Qualifications and Membership will notify the appellant of the outcome of their appeal.

Investigation outcome

There are three possible outcomes from Stage 2 of the appeals process:

- i. Appeal upheld – In this event, the original assessment outcome is released, or changed to ‘Complete’ for PEP assessment.
- ii. Appeal rejected – In this event, the original Assessment Offence outcome remains unchanged. If the appeal is rejected at this stage, then the decision is final.
- iii. Appeal referred to Appeals Review Committee – In the event that the Student does not agree with the outcome of Stage 2, the Head of Qualifications and Membership may refer the appeal to the Appeals Review Committee, Stage 3 of the appeal process.

The Student will be notified of the outcome of Stage 2.

Appeals Process Stage 3

Stage 3 involves a full hearing of the Appeals Review Committee:

- i. All papers relevant to the appeal will be provided to the Appeals Review Committee by CIPFA at least seven working days before the date of the hearing
- ii. The appeals hearing may be virtual and the Committee may interact by either a conference call or online, or any similar technology that allow for synchronous interaction
- iii. The Chair of the Appeals Review Committee will determine the precise procedure for each appeal hearing
- iv. The appellant is not able to submit further information to the Appeals Review Committee, unless invited to do so by the Committee, nor can the appellant attend the Committee hearing
- v. The Committee will reach a decision, set out a statement of reasons and advise the Student of the outcome in writing

The decision reached at Stage 3 of the appeals process is final.

Appeals Process Fees

The fee for an appeal against an Assessment Offence outcome is £200.

Students should note that:

- An appeal will not be accepted without the correct fee
- The fee will not be refunded for unsuccessful appeals
- The fee will be refunded for successful Appeals
- CIPFA is not liable for any other costs that the student may incur in submitting their appeal

Associated documents

- a) Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- b) Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy and Guidance

Policy details

Policy owner	Head of Qualifications and Membership
Version	1.3
Update	July 2023
Approval	SMB 05 September 2023
Process review date	September 2024

Regulatory references

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition A6: Identification and management of risks
Condition A7: Management of incidents
Condition A8: Malpractice and maladministration
Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition A6: Identification and management of risks
Condition A7: Management of incidents
Condition A8: Malpractice and maladministration