

EXAMINATIONS & ASSESSMENTS POLICY - Conflict of Interest

Introduction

This policy is about conflict of interest. All relevant staff and individuals have a responsibility to be aware of the potential for a conflict of interest.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect staff and students and the integrity of STCG colleges as exams centres. Any assessor or other member of staff involved in any way with internal assessments or exam processes must declare any conflict(s) of interest.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all staff and other individuals who interact with the work of the awarding bodies including teaching and marking.

Definition of conflict of interest

A conflict of interest occurs when an individual has competing interests or loyalties. The conflict of interest could compromise or appear to compromise their decisions if it is not properly managed. For the purposes of this policy situations where a conflict of interest occurs are:

- a) a member of staff taking a qualification at the centre which includes internally assessed components/units (taking at the centre as a last resort where unable to find an alternative centre)
- b) a candidate being taught and prepared for a qualification which includes internally assessed components/units by a member of staff with a personal connection to the candidate
- c) a member of exams office staff with a personal connection to a candidate being entered for exams and assessments at the centre or at another centre
- d) a member of centre staff taking a qualification at the centre which does not include internally assessed components/units (taking at the centre as a last resort where unable to find an alternative centre)
- e) a member of staff taking a qualification at another centre

STCG Management of Conflict of Interest

STCG colleges comply with the JCQ and other awarding bodies' conflict of interest regulations by:

- Ensuring the relevant awarding bodies are informed of any conflict of interest in situations a) and b) above
- Maintaining records that confirm the measures taken/protocols in place to mitigate any potential risk to the integrity of the qualifications affected in situations c), d) and e) above

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- Ensuring other relevant centre staff, where they may be involved in the receipt and dispatch of confidential exam materials, are briefed on the requirements for maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the exam materials

Responsibilities

Assessors/internal verifiers or other members of staff involved in any way with internal assessments or exam processes are responsible for ensuring that they are familiar with the Conflict of Interest policy and guidelines and are required to read and understand the policy on an annual basis. Staff are required to make declarations before any exam series in which they are involved, as soon as they become aware of a potential conflict or, in the case of new staff, upon appointment with STCG.

Making a declaration

All staff as described in the Policy Scope are required to make their declaration on Cascade whether they have a potential conflict of interest or not. Email reminders will be sent by Exams to relevant staff at key points. If any further action is required in cases of those who have declared a potential conflict they will be contacted by the relevant college’s Exams Office.

Declarations are treated confidentially within the bounds of what is required to be reported to the awarding bodies.

Action following a declaration

Depending on the nature of the declaration, (i) a report is made to the relevant awarding body or (ii) a log is kept of any action taken to mitigate risk. The individual concerned and Heads of Exams are equally responsible for ensuring that the issue is documented carefully. Records must include details of measures taken to mitigate any potential risk to the integrity of the qualifications involved. Records are held in the Exams Office to be available for inspection by JCQ inspectors and/or awarding body staff if required, or upon request by an awarding body, should concerns have been reported to them. They are retained until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.

NOTE: Members of staff can only be entered for qualifications at their own centre as a last resort and when they have genuinely tried but failed to find another centre. Proper protocols must be in place to prevent the member of staff having access to examination materials prior to the examination and other centre staff must be briefed on maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the examination materials. During any relevant examination series, the member of staff is treated the same as any other candidate entered for that examination, does not have access to examination materials and does not receive any preferential treatment.

Ultimate responsibility for the Conflict of Interest policy, dissemination of the policy and management of potential and actual conflicts of interest rests with Heads of Centres.

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