



End Point Assessment Service

Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

Version 3

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1. INTRODUCTION

Incidents of malpractice/maladministration can potentially lead to apprentices being disadvantaged, can require the conducting of costly and time-consuming investigations, and may cause reputational damage to the independent assessment service, employers, and training providers. It is therefore desirable to prevent malpractice or maladministration from occurring whenever possible. Where it is not possible to prevent this, cases of suspected or actual malpractice/maladministration should be dealt with quickly, thoroughly, and effectively.

2. SCOPE

This End Point Assessment Service policy has been designed with reference to the Ofqual general conditions of recognition, to meet the external quality assurance requirements of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) and applies to all end point assessment (EPA) activities.

This policy is not intended to be prescriptive or imply that using it will guarantee compliance with PIABC Limited requirements as it is each employer and/or training provider's responsibility to ensure they have in place appropriate internal controls and audit trails.

3. COMMUNICATION

It is important that those involved in the management, assessment, and quality assurance of PIABC Limited, and apprentices, are fully aware of the contents of the End Point Assessment Service policy and the guidance offered.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of all PIABC Limited staff, employers and training providers to be vigilant with regard to any events which may lead to malpractice/maladministration occurring, and that all those involved in EPA have arrangements in place to prevent and investigate instances of malpractice and maladministration.

5. DEFINITIONS

Malpractice

An activity or practice which deliberately contravenes regulations, and codes of practice where these compromises the integrity of the EPA process and/or the validity of apprenticeship certificates. It covers any deliberate actions, neglect, default, or other practice that compromises, or could compromise:

- The EPA process
- The integrity of an EPA activity
- The validity of a result or the apprenticeship certificate
- The reputation and credibility of PIABC Limited
- The apprenticeship brand
- The IfATE

Please note that these examples are not exhaustive and are only intended as guidance:

- Denial of access to premises, records, information, apprentices, and staff to any authorised PIABC Limited representative

- Failure to carry out internal assessment, internal moderation, or standardisation in accordance with EPA or PIABC Limited requirements
- Deliberate failure to adhere to PIABC Limited apprentice registration and certification procedures; adhere to EPA requirements; maintain appropriate auditable records (e.g. certification claims and/or forgery of evidence)
- Fraudulent claim for certificates
- The unauthorised use of inappropriate materials/equipment in assessment settings (e.g. mobile phones)
- Intentional withholding of information from PIABC Limited which is critical to maintaining the rigour of quality assurance and standards of EPA
- Deliberate misuse of PIABC Limited logo and trademarks or misrepresentation of a relationship with PIABC Limited
- Collusion or permitting collusion in questioning/assessments
- Persistent instances of maladministration
- Deliberate contravention by an employer/training provider/technical expert and / or its apprentices of the EPA rules specified for the apprenticeship, in accordance with the assessment plan
- A loss, theft of, or a breach of confidentiality in, any assessment materials
- Plagiarism by apprentices/staff

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. inappropriate apprentice records).

Please note that these examples are not exhaustive and are only intended as guidance:

- Persistent failure to: adhere to PIABC Limited apprentice registration and certification procedures; to adhere to EPA requirements; to schedule activities in enough time to allow PIABC Limited to source experts for their role in EPA; adhere to, or to circumnavigate, the requirements of PIABC Limited Reasonable Adjustments Policy,
- Late apprentice registrations
- Unreasonable delays in responding to requests and/or communications from PIABC Limited
- Failure to maintain appropriate auditable records
- Withholding of information, by deliberate act or omission, from us which is required to assure PIABC Limited of the ability to deliver appropriately
- Misuse of PIABC Limited logo and trademarks or misrepresentation of a relationship with PIABC Limited
- Infringements identified at audit of EPA delivery

6. PROCESS FOR MAKING AN ALLEGATION OF MALPRACTICE OR MALADMINISTRATION

Anyone who identifies or is made aware of suspected or actual cases of malpractice or maladministration at any time must immediately notify the EPA team.

All allegations must include (where possible):

- Employer and training provider name, address, and contact details
- Apprentice's name (where applicable)
- PIABC Limited personnel's details (name, job role) if they are involved in the case
- Details of PIABC Limited EPA affected, or nature of the service affected

- Nature of the suspected or actual malpractice and associated dates details and outcome of any initial investigation carried out by the employer or training provider, or anybody else involved in the case, including any mitigating circumstances

If the employer or training provider has conducted an initial investigation, prior to formally notifying PIABC Limited, the employer or training provider 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 employer or training provider must immediately notify PIABC Limited if they suspect malpractice or maladministration has occurred, as we have a responsibility to ensure that all investigations are carried out rigorously and effectively.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY AND WHISTLE BLOWING

Whistleblowing is a term used to refer to an individual who discloses information relating to actual malpractice or maladministration and/or the covering up of such practices. Whistle-blowers have protection in law under the Public Interest Disclosure Act in certain circumstances.

PIABC Limited will always endeavour to keep a whistle-blower's identity confidential where asked to do so, although we cannot guarantee this and we may need to disclose your identity to the police or other law enforcement agencies, the courts or another person to whom we are required by law to disclose your identity. A whistle-blower should also recognise that he or she may be identifiable by others due to the nature or circumstances of the disclosure. While we are prepared to investigate issues, which are reported to us anonymously, we shall always try to confirm an allegation by means of a separate investigation before taking up the matter with those the complaint/allegation relates to. It is not always possible to investigate or substantiate anonymous reports.

8. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INVESTIGATION

All suspected cases of maladministration and malpractice will be examined promptly to establish if malpractice or maladministration has occurred and will take all reasonable steps to prevent any adverse effect from occurring.

All suspected cases of malpractice and maladministration will be passed to Director of Operations and Professional Development at PIABC Limited and we will acknowledge receipt, as appropriate, to external parties within 48 hours.

PIABC Limited will be responsible for ensuring the investigation is carried out in a prompt and effective manner and in accordance with the procedures in this policy and will allocate a relevant member of staff to lead the investigation and establish whether or not the malpractice or maladministration has occurred, and review any supporting evidence received or gathered by PIABC Limited.

At all times we will ensure that PIABC Limited personnel assigned to the investigation have the appropriate level of training and competence and they have had no previous involvement or personal interest in the matter.

9. NOTIFYING RELEVANT PARTIES

In all cases of suspected or actual malpractice, we will notify the lead contact involved in the allegation that we will be investigating the matter. We may ask you to investigate the issue in liaison with PIABC Limited's own personnel – in doing so we may withhold details of the person making the allegation if to do so would breach a duty of confidentiality or any other legal duty.

Where applicable, Director of Professional Development at PIABC Limited will inform the IfATE or Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if we believe there has been an incident of malpractice or maladministration which could either invalidate the award of an apprenticeship.

Where the allegation may affect another organisation, we will also inform them. If we do not know the details of organisations that might be affected, we will ask the IfATE or ESFA to help us identify relevant parties that should be informed.

10. INVESTIGATION TIMELINES AND SUMMARY PROCESS

We aim to action and resolve all stages of the investigation within 10 working days of receipt of the allegation. Please note that in some cases the investigation may take longer; for example, if a visit is required. In such instances, we will advise all parties concerned of the likely revised timescale. The fundamental principle of all investigations is to conduct them in a fair, reasonable and legal manner, ensuring that all relevant evidence is considered without bias. In doing so investigations will be based around the following broad objectives:

- To establish the facts relating to allegations/complaints to determine whether any irregularities have occurred
- To identify the cause of the irregularities and those involved
- To establish the scale of the irregularities
- To evaluate any action already taken by the employer
- To determine whether remedial action is required to reduce the risk to current registered apprentices and to preserve the integrity of the qualification
- To ascertain whether any action is required in respect of certificates already issued
- To obtain clear evidence to support any sanctions to be applied to the employer or training provider or technical expert, and/or to members of staff, in accordance with PIABC Limited Sanctions Policy
- To identify any adverse patterns or trends
- The investigation may involve a request for further information from relevant parties and/or interviews with personnel involved in the investigation.
- Therefore, we will:
 - Ensure all material collected as part of an investigation is kept secure. All records and original documentation concerning a completed investigation that ultimately leads to sanctions against an employer/training provider/technical expert will be retained for a period of not less than five years.
 - If an investigation leads to invalidation of certificates, or criminal or civil prosecution, all records and original documentation relating to the case will be retained until the case and any appeals have been heard and for five years thereafter.
 - Expect all parties, who are either directly or indirectly involved in the investigation, to fully co-operate with us.

Either at notification of a suspected or actual case of malpractice or maladministration and / or at any time during the investigation, we reserve the right to impose sanctions on the employer or training provider in accordance with PIABC Limited's *End Point Assessment Service – Sanctions Policy* to protect the interests of apprentices and the integrity of the apprenticeship EPA. We also reserve the right to withhold an apprentice's and / or cohort's results for EPA if they were undergoing EPA at the time of the notification or investigation of suspected or actual malpractice / maladministration.

If appropriate, we may find that the complexity of a case or a lack of cooperation from an employer or training provider means that they are unable to complete an investigation. In such circumstances we will consult the relevant regulatory authority to determine how best to progress the matter.

Where a member of PIABC Limited staff is under investigation we may suspend them or move them to other duties until the investigation is complete.

Throughout the investigation Director of Operations and Professional Development at PIABC Limited will be responsible for overseeing the work of the investigation team to ensure that due process is being followed, appropriate evidence has been gathered and reviewed and for liaising with and keeping informed relevant external parties. If Director of Operations and Professional Development at PIABC Limited has any conflict in doing this, another senior member of staff will be appointed to manage the investigation.

11. INVESTIGATION REPORT

After an investigation, we will produce a draft report for relevant parties concerned to check the factual accuracy where appropriate. Any subsequent amendments will be agreed between the parties concerned and ourselves.

The report will:

- Identify where the breach, if any, occurred
- Confirm the facts of the case. Identify who is responsible for the breach (if any)
- Confirm an appropriate level of remedial action to be applied

We will make the final report available to the parties concerned and to other external agencies as required.

If it was an independent/third party that notified us of the suspected or actual case of malpractice, we will also inform them of the outcome – normally within 10 working days of making PIABC Limited decision - in doing so we may withhold some details if to disclose such information would breach a duty of confidentiality or any other legal duty.

If it is an internal investigation against a member of PIABC Limited staff, the report will be agreed by Director of Operations and Professional Development at PIABC Limited with the relevant internal managers and appropriate internal procedures will be implemented.

12. INVESTIGATION OUTCOME

If the investigation confirms that malpractice or maladministration has taken place, we will consider what action to take to:

- Minimise the risk to the integrity of EPA delivery and apprenticeships certification now and in the future
- Maintain public confidence in the delivery of EPA and the award of the apprenticeship certificate
- Discourage others from carrying out similar instances of malpractice or maladministration
- Ensure there has been no gain from compromising PIABC Limited standards

The actions we may take include:

- Inform the IfATE
- Impose actions in relation to the employer/training provider with specified deadlines to address the instance of malpractice/maladministration and to prevent it from recurring

- Impose non-conformances or sanctions on the employer/training provider – if so, these will be communicated in accordance with PIABC Limited's *End Point Assessment Service –Sanctions Policy* along with the rationale for the sanction(s) selected
- In cases where certificates are deemed to be invalid, inform the employer and lead training provider concerned why they are invalid and any action to be taken for reassessment and / or for the withdrawal of the certificates. We will also ask the employer/training provider to let the affected apprentices know the action we are taking and that their original certificates are invalid and ask the employer, where possible, to return the invalid certificates. We will also amend PIABC Limited database so that duplicates of the invalid certificates cannot be issued and we expect the employer and their lead training provider to amend their records to show that the original awards are invalid and that the apprentice has not completed and achieved
- Review and if necessary, amend aspects of PIABC Limited delivery and certification arrangements and if appropriate, assessment and/or monitoring arrangements and associated guidance to prevent the issue from recurring
- Inform relevant third parties (e.g. funding bodies) of PIABC Limited findings in case they need to take relevant action

In proven cases of malpractice and/or maladministration, PIABC Limited reserves the right to charge for any re-assessment and re-issuing of certificates and/or additional external quality assurance or audit visits. The fees for re-assessment for these visits will be the current PIABC Limited prices for such activities at the time of the investigation. In addition to the above Director of Operations and Professional Development at PIABC Limited will record any lessons learnt from the investigation and pass these onto relevant internal colleagues to help PIABC Limited to prevent the same instance of maladministration or malpractice from reoccurring.

If the relevant party (or parties) wishes to appeal against PIABC Limited decision to impose non-conformances or sanctions, please refer to PIABC Limited's *End Point Assessment Service – Enquiries and Appeals Policy*.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact the EPA team at:

Email: piabc@iom3.org

Telephone: +44 (0)1476 513884

Post:
PIABC Limited
The Boilerhouse
Caunt Road
Grantham
NG31 7FZ

Website: www.piabc.org.uk