



The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)

JCQ Statement – for immediate release 22 November 2005

Coursework in examinations

Recently there has been considerable public debate regarding the authenticity of coursework being submitted as part of the examinations process. Independent reports including the recently published report from QCA *Improving coursework assessment*, confirm that there are very few cases of malpractice. The JCQ continues to provide regulations and guidance on the production and assessment of coursework and to monitor the implementation of these.

The JCQ notice to candidates is issued to all candidates at the start of their course. The Notice makes clear to candidates that:

“The work you submit for assessment must be your own”

When they submit their work candidates must sign a declaration stating that the work they are submitting is their own. Teachers are required to confirm the authenticity of the work candidates submit.

A number of qualifications have elements of coursework. The process for assessing coursework includes internal assessment and external moderation.

Internal assessment - Teachers and lecturers act as internal assessors. They know their candidates' style and also their strengths and weaknesses. They use this knowledge and their expertise in assessing and their subject to check the authenticity of coursework. There are very few cases of malpractice. In the overwhelming majority of cases centres monitor the coursework situation well and coursework pieces which have been heavily reliant on other sources rarely reach the notice of the awarding bodies.

External moderation - This is used as a further check on the authenticity of candidates' work. This can include the use of anti-plagiarism software.

The JCQ is aware that candidates, teachers, parents and members of the public may be concerned about the reports that periodically surface in the media.

As part of our ongoing drive to preserve the integrity of the exams system we are working to reduce the potential for candidates to use work produced by other people and can reassure the public that this issue is taken very seriously.

In terms of candidates who submit coursework that has been produced by others the internal assessment process is central to monitoring this. Submitting work that is not their own is clearly malpractice. Under the JCQ *Guidelines for dealing with instances of suspected malpractice in examinations*, Awarding Bodies would consider a candidate submitting work that has been produced by someone else to be

‘Behaving in such a way as to undermine the integrity of the examination’

and

‘Failing to abide by the instructions or advice of an invigilator, supervisor, or the awarding body in relation to the examination rules and regulations’.

The internal assessment process is also central to monitoring plagiarised work. The JCQ document *Guidelines for dealing with instances of suspected malpractice in examinations* continues to refer to plagiarism as a specific form of malpractice.

‘Plagiarism: the failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of another person’s work as if it were the candidates’ own;’

As a consequence candidates submitting work produced by others or plagiarised work would be dealt with in accordance with the guidelines and would be liable to disqualification.

Malpractice specialists from awarding bodies meet regularly to review cases, regulations, guidance and penalties. Earlier this year the JCQ issued further guidance to teachers, candidates and awarding body staff about reducing plagiarism. The definitions, strategies and good practice contained in this guidance can be applied to coursework in general. This guidance addresses a number of the issues referred to in the QCA report including

- Prevention at the qualification design stage
- Prevention at the question or task setting stage
- Defining malpractice
- Keeping watch on content, style, presentation, etc.
- Dealing with malpractice (including investigating and reporting suspected instances)

Other work that is currently in progress includes

- Reviewing the effectiveness of the new guidance on plagiarism
- A series of projects that introduce piloting of different methods for detecting and identifying work that is either plagiarised or has been previously submitted. These pilots will help to reduce the potential to use and re-use work produced by other

people. These pilots are being run in conjunction with Northumbria Learning and the JISC Plagiarism Advisory Service and will include the piloting of Turnitin, an online plagiarism detection tool. These pilots will be reviewed in 2006

- Publication of case studies in order that teachers and candidates better understand how penalties are applied

We are currently working with the regulators on taking other issues forward and are committed to working with them on the recommendations in *A Review of GCE and GCSE Coursework Arrangements*.

Case studies

GCE Sport and Physical Education

A moderator reported that two candidates submitted coursework assignments which contained an identical essay on information processing, the only difference being the order of two paragraphs. On investigation one candidate admitted to **copying** sections of the **other candidate's work** and submitting it as his own. The candidate had lifted the main paragraphs, changed the order and used them in his own work, without the knowledge of the candidate concerned.

The awarding body disqualified the candidate from the subject.

GCSE German

The moderator allocated to the centre for GCSE German coursework reported a suspicion that this candidate had included a piece of work taken from the internet without acknowledgement, i.e. the candidate had **plagiarised** the work. The awarding body asked the centre to investigate the case and, following this investigation, the candidate admitted to including a piece of work that was not his own. The awarding body awarded a mark of zero to the candidate for the coursework component.

GCSE English and English Literature

During the internal standardisation process the head of the English department at the centre became suspicious of one section of the work produced by one candidate. The head of department checked a "search engine" to find that there were many internet sites containing the work. It was clear that the candidate's work contained large sections that had been **plagiarised**.

The centre referred the incident to the awarding body which disqualified the candidate in GCSE English and English Literature.

Notes

1. The JCQ consists of AQA, Cambridge Assessment (including OCR), CCEA, City & Guilds, Edexcel, SQA and WJEC, the seven largest providers of qualifications in the UK, offering AEA, GCE, VCE, Scottish Highers, GCSE, GNVQ, Entry level, Vocational and Vocationally-related qualifications.
2. The JCQ was established in January 2004 and supercedes the Joint Council for General Qualifications (JCGQ, 1998-2003). The JCQ has been formed to enable the member Awarding Bodies to act together in
 - Providing, wherever possible, common administrative arrangements for the schools and colleges and other providers which offer their qualifications;
 - Dealing with the Regulatory Authorities; in responding to proposals and initiatives on assessment and the curriculum;
 - Dealing with the media on issues affecting all member Bodies.