



Appeals, Assessment, Internal Verification & Malpractice

Adopted by Utopia - for review by the Board of Directors
Last amended Sept 2026
For review - Annually - Review targets annually

Appeals Policy

Aim:

- To enable the student to enquire, question or appeal against an assessment decision.
- To attempt to reach agreement between the student and the assessor at the earliest opportunity.
- To standardise and record any appeal to ensure openness and fairness.
- To facilitate a student's ultimate right of appeal to the awarding body, where appropriate.
- To protect the interests of all students and the integrity of the qualification.

In order to do this, Utopia will:

- Inform the student at induction, of the Appeals Policy and procedure.
- Record, track and validate any appeal.
- Forward the appeal to the awarding body when a student considers that a decision continues to disadvantage her/him after the internal appeals process has been exhausted.
- Keep appeals records for inspection by the awarding body for a minimum of 18 months.
- Have a staged appeals procedure.
 - **Stage 1 - Appeal raised** - Student informs assessor that they are unhappy with the grade/outcome of assessed work.
 - **Stage 2 - Informal:** Student consults with assessor within a defined period of time following the assessment decision, to discuss an assessment decision. If unresolved, then the issues are documented before moving to Stage 3.
 - **Stage 3 - Review:** Review of assessment decisions by manager and/or internal verifier/lead internal verifier. Student notified of findings and agrees or disagrees, in writing, with outcome. If unresolved, move to Stage 4.
 - **Stage 4 - Appeal hearing:** Senior management hear the appeal: last stage by the centre. If unresolved, move to Stage 5.
 - **Stage 5 - External appeal:** The grounds for appeal and any supporting documentation must be submitted by the centre to the awarding body within 14 days of the completion of Stage 5; a fee is levied.
- Will take appropriate action to protect the interest of other students and the integrity of the qualification, when the outcome of an appeal questions the validity of other results.
- Monitor appeals to inform quality improvement.

Appeals Process

What students can do if they are unhappy about an assessment decision?

At Utopia we respect students right to appeal and will endeavor to support students through the appeals process. Awarding bodies will not intervene until we have carried out an extensive internal enquiry, which involves these five stages:

Stage 1

Student is unhappy with the grade/outcome of assessed work.

Stage 2

Student should discuss the outcome with the tutor that marked that work. If they are still unhappy with the outcome then go to stage three.

Stage 3

Student work will be re-assessed by the Internal Verifier. If student is still unhappy with the outcome move to stage four.

Stage 4

The Quality Nominee will review student work and make a judgement in favour of the student or the assessor. If student is still unhappy with the outcome of the appeal then they move to stage five.

Stage 5

We will refer the appeal to the Awarding body. The appropriate documentation will be completed by the exams officer.

Appeals, Assessment, Internal Verification & Malpractice Policy

- All candidates will be informed of arrangements to review or appeal results before the issue of any results.
- Senior staff will be available to candidates immediately after the publication of results so that they can be discussed and decisions can be made regarding submissions of reviews to marking. The centres will make requests for reviews.
- Any private candidates will be encouraged to make a request of review through the centre but informed they can make this directly.
- If a candidate or the centre wishes to appeal post results, we will refer to the JCQ guide to the awarding bodies' appeals processes (<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/appeals>)
- This will take place after a review of results has been reported to the centre.
- The headteacher will make the appeal in writing and clearly stating the grounds of the appeal.
- If there is a dispute between the centre and the candidate regarding an appeal, the centre will make the appeal but make it clear to the candidate that if the appeal is denied, the candidate will need to pay the fee to the appropriate body.

Assessment Policy

Aim:

- To ensure that assessment methodology is valid, reliable and does not disadvantage or advantage any group of students or individuals.
- To ensure that the assessment procedure is open, fair and free from bias and to national standards.
- To ensure that there is accurate and detailed recording of assessment decisions.

In order to do this, Utopia will:

- Ensure that students are provided with assignments that are fit for purpose, to enable them to produce appropriate evidence for assessment.
- Assess students' evidence using only the published assessment and grading criteria.
- Ensure that assessment decisions are impartial, valid and reliable.
- Not limit or 'cap' student achievement if work is submitted late.
- Develop assessment procedures that will minimise the opportunity for malpractice.
- Maintain accurate and detailed records of assessment decisions.
- Maintain a robust and rigorous internal verification procedure.
- Provide samples for Standards Verification as required by the awarding body.
- Monitor standards verification reports and undertake any remedial action required.
- Share good assessment practice between all programme teams.
- Ensure that all staff understand the assessment methodology and the role of the assessor.
- Provide resources to ensure that assessment can be performed accurately and appropriately.

Assessment Malpractice Policy

Aim:

- To identify and minimise the risk of malpractice by staff or students.
- To respond to any incident of alleged malpractice promptly and objectively.
- To standardise and record any investigation of malpractice to ensure openness and fairness.
- To impose appropriate penalties and/or sanctions on students or staff where incidents (or attempted incidents) of malpractice are proven.
- To protect the integrity of the centre and its registered qualifications.

In order to do this, Utopia will:

- Seek to avoid potential malpractice by using the induction period and the student handbook to inform students of the centre's policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice.
- Show students the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources.
- Ask students to declare that their work is their own.
- Ask students to provide evidence that they have interpreted and synthesised appropriate information and acknowledged any sources used.
- Conduct an investigation in a form commensurate with the nature of the malpractice allegation. Such an investigation will be supported by the Headteacher and all personnel linked to the allegation. It will proceed through the following stages:

Stage 1 - Interview relevant individuals and collect evidence

Stage 2 - Present a report to the Headteacher

Stage 3 - Headteacher decides on subsequent action

- Make the individual fully aware at the earliest opportunity of the nature of the alleged malpractice and of the possible consequences should malpractice be proven.
- Give the individual the opportunity to respond to the allegations made.
- Inform the individual of the avenues for appealing against any judgement made.
- Document all stages of any investigation.
- Were malpractice is proven, the centre will apply carefully considered penalties/sanctions.

Definition of Malpractice by Students

This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by Utopia at its discretion:

- Plagiarism of any nature.
- Collusion by working collaboratively with other students to produce work that is submitted as individual student work.
- Copying (including the use of ICT to aid copying).
- Deliberate destruction of another's work.
- Fabrication of results or evidence.
- False declaration of authenticity in relation to the contents of a portfolio or coursework.
- Impersonation by pretending to be someone else in order to produce the work for another or arranging for another to take one's place in an assessment/examination/test.

Definition of malpractice by Utopia Staff

This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by Utopia at its discretion:

- Improper assistance to candidates.
- Inventing or changing marks for internally assessed work (coursework or portfolio evidence) where there is insufficient evidence of the candidates' achievement to justify the marks given or assessment decisions made.
- Failure to keep candidate coursework/portfolios of evidence secure.
- Fraudulent claims for certificates.
- Inappropriate retention of certificates.
- Assisting students in the production of work for assessment, where the support has the potential to influence the outcomes of assessment, for example where the assistance involves Utopia staff producing work for the student.
- Producing falsified witness statements, for example for evidence the student has not generated.
- Allowing evidence, which is known by the staff member not to be the student's own, to be included in a student's assignment/task/portfolio/coursework.
- Facilitating and allowing impersonation.
- Misusing the conditions for special student requirements, for example where students are permitted support, such as an amanuensis, this is permissible up to the point where the support has the potential to influence the outcome of the assessment.
- Falsifying records/certificates, for example by alteration, substitution, or by fraud.
- Fraudulent certificate claims that is claiming for a certificate prior to the student completing all the requirements of assessment.

Malpractice and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard. Utopia recognises that AI has many uses to help pupils learn but may also lend itself to cheating and plagiarism.

In assessments, students must submit work that is their own. This means ensuring that the final product is in their own words and isn't copied or paraphrased from another source, such as an AI tool, and that the content reflects their own independent work. Students are expected to demonstrate their own knowledge, skills, and understanding as required by the qualification in questions and as set out in the qualification specification.

- Misuse of AI includes but is not limited to the following:
- Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work submitted for assessment is not the student's own
- Copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content
- Using AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the student's work, analysis, evaluation or calculations
- Failing to acknowledge the use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information
- Incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools
- Submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies

For more information on AI misuse, see [guidance from JCQ on AI use in assessments](#). Any misuse of AI tools may be treated as malpractice.

Internal Verification Policy

Aim:

- To ensure there is an accredited lead internal verifier in each principal subject area.
- To ensure that internal verification is valid, reliable and covers all assessors and programme activity.
- To ensure that the internal verification procedure is open, fair and free from bias.
- To ensure that there is accurate and detailed recording of internal verification decisions.

In order to do this, Utopia will ensure:

- An accredited lead internal verifier is appointed for each principal subject area.
- Each internal verifier completes annual standardisation training.
- Each lead internal verifier oversees effective internal verification systems within each principal subject area.
- Staff are briefed and trained in the requirements for current internal verification procedures.
- Effective internal verification roles are defined, maintained and supported.
- Internal verification is promoted as a developmental process between staff.
- Standardised internal verification documentation is provided and used.
- All centre assessment instruments are verified as fit for purpose.
- An annual internal verification schedule, linked to assessment plans, is in place.
- An appropriately structured sample of assessment from all programmes and teams internally verified, to ensure school programmes conform to national standards and standards verification requirements.
- Secure records of all internal verification activity are maintained.
- The outcome of internal verification is used to enhance future assessment practice.

Internal Verification Process

Internal Verification

Internal verification is an important part of qualification delivery and assessment. It makes sure those internally assessed units that students complete:

- have appropriate assessment opportunities
- are assessed accurately to national standards.

Internal verification is a process undertaken to check that:

- assessment and grading is consistent across the programme
- assessment instruments (assignments) are fit for purpose - i.e. they enable students to produce evidence which meets the targeted assessment criteria
- assessment decisions accurately judge student evidence against the assessment criteria.

Internal Verification Process

Assignment briefs that students receive should be internally verified before they receive them to ensure that it:

- has accurate unit details
- has accurate programme details
- has clear deadlines for assessment
- shows all relevant assessment criteria for the unit(s) covered in the assignment
- indicates relevant assessment criteria targeted against each task
- clearly states what evidence you need to provide
- is likely to generate evidence which is appropriate and sufficient
- is set at the appropriate level
- has a time period of appropriate duration
- uses suitable vocational language
- has a clear presentation format.

Timing

Internal verification will be carried out in a timely way throughout the year. It will usually take place at the end of each Unit of work that students complete (this is usually termly). Internal verification is important as it helps support Assessors, to ensure that they mark work correctly and give constructive feedback.

Internal verification takes place once tutor assesses the work that has been submitted. The Internal Verifier then checks the tutor's assessment decisions, to make sure that they are correct in relation to the assessment criteria of each unit.

Internally verifying assessment decisions

The Internal Verifier reviews the Assessor's judgments against the learning aim, unit content, assessment criteria and assessment guidance as published in the qualification specification. They will check:

- student work against the assessment criteria and judge whether it has been assessed accurately.
- coverage of the unit content and assessment guidance to see if the Assessor has taken this into account - does the assessment reflect the breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding identified in the content?
- the feedback from Assessor to the student is accurate and linked to the assessment criteria. Remember, the Internal Verifier is judging the Assessor, not the student.

If the Internal Verifier judges that student work has been inaccurately assessed, appropriate action will be identified on the internal verification form. If inaccuracies are identified, the Assessor will re-assess the work in the light of the Internal Verifier's comments and it will then be checked again by the Internal Verifier, signed and dated.