

Malpractice & Maladministration Policy

Version Number	2.5 (June, 2025)
Description	This policy and procedure inform how Malpractice and maladministration is implemented throughout the Academy
Target Audience	This policy is relevant to all staff, learner, contractors, and members of the public
Author	AIMS Academy

Introduction

This policy applies to all staff and learners delivering or registered on AIMS Academy programmes or approved qualifications. It ensures consistent handling of suspected or actual malpractice/maladministration cases and aligns with the OTHM Malpractice Policy. This updated version reflects recommendations from the May 2025 EQA report and OTHM's regulatory expectations.

Definition of Malpractice

Malpractice is essentially any activity or practice, which deliberately contravenes regulations and compromises the integrity of the internal or external assessment process and/or the validity of certificates.

It covers any deliberate actions, neglect, default or other practice that compromises, or could compromise:

- the assessment process;
- the integrity of a regulated qualification;
- the validity of a result or certificate;
- the reputation and credibility of AIMS; or,
- The qualification or the wider qualifications community.
- Learner using Similarity more than 15%.

- Learner using AI structure text

Definition of Plagiarism:

Centre Define Plagiarism as a specific type of malpractice and includes, but is not limited to:

- Copying or closely imitating the work of another learner or author without proper citation.
- Using AI-generated content or structure (e.g., ChatGPT, AI paraphrasing tools) without acknowledgement.
- Submitting assignments with a similarity index higher than 15% as detected by similarity detection software (e.g., Turnitin).
- Recycling one's own previously submitted work for another assignment (self-plagiarism).
- Failing AI-detection checks without justified explanation or evidence of original authorship.

Malpractice may include a range of issues from the failure to maintain appropriate records or systems, to the deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates.

For the purpose of this policy this term also covers misconduct and forms of unnecessary discrimination or bias towards certain or groups of learners.

Definition of 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.

Examples of maladministration

Persistent failure to adhere to our learner registration and certification procedures.

- Persistent failure to adhere to our centre recognition and/or qualification requirements and/or
- associated actions assigned to the centre
- Late learner registrations (both infrequent and persistent)
- Unreasonable delays in responding to requests and/or communications from AIMS
- Inaccurate claim for certificates

- Failure to maintain appropriate auditable records, e.g. certification claims and/or forgery of evidence
- Withholding of information, by deliberate act or omission, from us which is required to assure Active

Examples of malpractice

- Failure to carry out internal assessment, internal moderation or internal verification in accordance with our requirements
- Deliberate failure to adhere to our learner registration and certification procedures.
- Deliberate failure to continually adhere to our centre recognition and/or qualification approval requirements or actions assigned to your centre
- Deliberate failure to maintain appropriate auditable records, e.g. certification claims and/or forgery of evidence
- Fraudulent claim(s) for certificates
- Intentional withholding of information from us which is critical to maintaining the rigour of quality assurance and standards of qualifications
- Collusion or permitting collusion in exams/assessments
- Learners still working towards qualification after certification claims have been made
- Plagiarism by learners/staff
- Copying from another learner (including using ICT to do so).
- Failure of Similarity detection threshold above 15%.
- Failure of detection of AI structure text.
- Failure of AI-detection checks for all submissions using tools Turnitin-AI after considering false positive.

Centre Duties and Obligations

AIMS Academy adheres to the duties outlined by OTHM. These include:

- Promptly reporting all suspected instances of malpractice and/or maladministration to OTHM.
- Supplying any additional information required by OTHM to support investigations.
- Fully cooperating with OTHM during malpractice investigations. Failure to do so may result in penalties under OTHM's Centre Sanctions Policy.
- Ensuring that failure to disclose known malpractice/maladministration is itself treated as a form of malpractice.
- Strongly encouraging all learners to confidentially report suspected malpractice/maladministration to OTHM.

Process for making an allegation of malpractice or maladministration

Anybody who identifies or is made aware of suspected or actual cases of malpractice or maladministration at any time must immediately notify the Directors of Academy of International management Studies. In doing so they should put them in writing/email and enclose appropriate supporting evidence.

- All allegations must include (where possible):
- Learner's name and AIMS registration number
- AIMS's staff members name and job role - if they are involved in the case
- Details of the course/qualification 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 centre or anybody else involved in the case, including any mitigating circumstances

The Directors will then conduct an initial investigation prior to ensure that staff involved in the initial investigation are competent and have no personal interest in the outcome of the investigation.

In all cases of suspected malpractice and maladministration reported we'll protect the identity of the 'informant' in accordance with our duty of confidentiality and/or any other legal duty.

Confidentiality and whistle blowing

Sometimes a person making an allegation of malpractice or maladministration may wish to remain anonymous. Although it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us; however if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences you may request that the Directors do not divulge your identity.

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 allegation relates.

Responsibility for the investigation

In accordance with regulatory requirements all suspected cases of maladministration and malpractice will be examined promptly by AIMS to establish if malpractice or maladministration has occurred and will take all reasonable steps to prevent any adverse effect from the occurrence.

We will acknowledge receipt, as appropriate, to external parties within 48 hours.

Our Director 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 AIMS.

Notifying relevant parties

Where applicable, our Director will inform the appropriate regulatory authorities if we believe there has been an incident of malpractice or maladministration which could either invalidate the award of a qualification or if it could affect another awarding organisations.

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.

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 in order 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
- To determine whether remedial action is required to reduce the risk to current registered learners and to preserve the integrity of AIMS and the qualification.
- 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 must be kept secure.
- 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 withhold a learner's, and/or cohort's, results.

Where a member of AIMS's staff or an AIMS Associate is under investigation we may suspend them or move them to other duties until the investigation is complete.

Throughout the investigation our Director 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.

Investigation report

After an investigation, we'll produce a draft report for the parties concerned to check the factual accuracy. 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'll make the final report available to the parties concerned and to the regulatory authorities and other external agencies as required.

If it was an independent/third party that notified us of the suspected or actual case of malpractice, we'll also inform them of the outcome – normally within 10 working days of making our 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's an internal investigation against a member of our staff the report will be agreed by the Directors, along with the relevant internal managers and appropriate internal disciplinary procedures will be implemented.

Investigation outcomes

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

- Minimize the risk to the integrity of certification now and in the future.
- Maintain public confidence in the delivery and awarding of qualifications.
- Discourage others from carrying out similar instances of malpractice or maladministration.
- Ensure there has been no gain from compromising our standards.

The action we take may include:

- Imposing actions in order to address the instance of malpractice/maladministration and to prevent it from reoccurring
- In cases where certificates are deemed to be invalid, inform the Awarding Organisation concerned and the regulatory authorities why they're invalid and any action to be taken for reassessment and/or for the withdrawal of the certificates. We'll also let the affected learners know the action we're taking and that their original certificates are invalid and ask – where possible – to return the invalid certificates to AIMS.
- Informing relevant third parties (e.g. funding bodies) of our findings in case they need to take relevant action in relation to the centre.

Consequence for Learners:

Consequences for Learners Found Guilty of malpractice including Plagiarism Include:

1. A formal written warning and mandatory attendance in academic integrity training (for first-time minor offences).
2. Requirement to resubmit the assignment with academic penalties (e.g., capped mark).
3. Disqualification of the affected assignment or module.
4. Notification to awarding bodies.
5. All suspected cases of plagiarism will be thoroughly investigated in line with this policy, ensuring fairness and confidentiality.

Consequence for Assessor:

1. The assessor will get Verbal Warning
2. Self-Reflection Report: The assessor submits a written statement explaining the mistake, its impact, and how they plan to improve.
3. Additional Training will be given
4. Accepting Temporary Role Adjustments: Voluntarily stepping back from certain responsibilities to rebuild trust.

In addition, to the above the Director will record any lessons learnt from the investigation and pass these onto relevant internal colleagues to help prevent the same instance of maladministration or malpractice from reoccurring.

Appeals

Appeals must follow the AIMS Academy Complaints and Appeals Procedure.

Review

This policy is reviewed annually or when regulatory guidance changes.

References

<https://www.othm.org.uk/>

Signed: _____

Director, AIMS Academy

Date Updated: 09 June 2025