

Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice

Ofqual welcomes the Report of the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice, published today (10 September 2019). The Commission supports our view that there is not an endemic problem of malpractice in the exam system in England, and that the vast majority of people involved act with integrity and professionalism. Nevertheless, it is essential for public confidence that all opportunities are taken to reduce the incentives and potential for malpractice to occur, particularly in the light of growing threats posed by the use of technology. We look forward to working with JCQ and the exam boards to implement the recommendations.

Many of the Report's recommendations are ones that we have also identified, support and have begun to work with other stakeholders to address. In general, there is a need for greater clarity and consistency in the ways in which malpractice is identified, prevented and sanctioned, and also how associated data should be collected and communicated.

In particular, we agree that it is unhelpful to have varying definitions of malpractice, which can create confusion and inconsistency in approaches between individuals and organisations. We therefore support efforts to broaden understanding of what constitutes malpractice and what the anticipated responses might be when issues arise. From our perspective, we are at various stages of consultation (either intended or already initiated) on revisions to our guidance for awarding organisations around issues of personal interest and what constitutes malpractice and maladministration.

We agree with the Commission's view that gathering good quality data and reporting it in engaging ways is important, and we are pleased that our work in this area has been recognised. Nevertheless, we will reflect on the Commission's view that there is more that can be done and we will work with counterpart organisations as appropriate.

With regard to access arrangements, the Commission's report supports our strong view that there is a need for more meaningful candidate level data to be collected, alongside greater clarity of different arrangement definitions. It is only with this data that questions of fairness can be answered satisfactorily. There is, of course, a balance to be struck between gathering meaningful data and being mindful of any extra burden this could place on schools and colleges. We are discussing this trade-off with stakeholders and will work to develop a way to ensure the necessary data is collected in the most efficient way possible.