

Whistleblowing Policy

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Introduction

All organisations face the risk of things going wrong or of unknowingly obscuring malpractice. We have a duty to identify and take measures to remedy all malpractice particularly regarding issues of fraud and corruption.

By encouraging a culture of openness in organisations, CIOL Qualifications (CIOLQ) aims to reduce and/or mitigate the risk of malpractice before it occurs.

We want to encourage you to raise issues which concern you in your work and learning. We recognise, however, that people may be worried that by reporting incidents, you will be opening yourself up to victimisation, detriment or risking your job security.

These concerns are understandable. This policy is therefore designed to provide you with information about the protection offered by the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA), as well as the process by which you may raise your concerns.

By being aware about malpractice at an early stage there is more chance that the necessary steps are implemented to safeguard the interests of all candidates and staff and to stop fraudulent activity before things worsen.

Scope

This policy is intended to provide guidance to any individual, employed or contracted by CIOL Qualifications (CIOLQ), who wishes to disclose information relating to the delivery and/or assessment of CIOLQ qualifications in relation to malpractice or maladministration.

Disclosures to CIOLQ may be made by, for example:

- Internal staff
- Assessment Associates
- Board and Council members
- Exam Venue staff
- External contractors
- Candidates

Definitions

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is defined as the act of disclosure by any individual concerning an instance of malpractice, or the covering up of malpractice.

Whistleblowing is distinct from complaints and appeals.

Malpractice

Any deliberate activity, 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 CIOLQ and/or its qualifications

Complaint

Any concern relating to a personal grievance over any of our services received or expected, or the services of Exam Venues or external contractors provided to candidates.

Review of Marking and Independent Review Appeals Policy

Any concern or objection that relates to an assessment result.

How to report a concern

For CIOLQ Staff and Contractors

If you work for CIOLQ and have concerns about CIOLQ qualifications:

- First, discuss the issue with your line manager
- If the concern involves an external individual and/or organisation, try speaking directly with them
- Only escalate further if these steps don't resolve the issue

For External Organisations and Individuals

If you work with CIOLQ qualifications and have concerns:

- First, try to resolve the issue directly with the relevant CIOLQ contact or department
- If the concern involves another external organisation, consider speaking with them directly
- If direct discussion doesn't work, escalate by contacting CIOLQ

To escalate, the issue should be reported directly to the Head of Qualifications by email to qualifications@ciol.org.uk, using the CIOLQ Whistleblowing Report Form, attached to the email. If reports are made anonymously and/or specific malpractice details are not provided, it may not be possible to substantiate the disclosure and carry out a full investigation.

What we will do

After you have raised your concern, we will decide on what action to take in a responsible and appropriate manner. Usually this will involve making internal enquiries initially, but it may be necessary to carry out an investigation at a later stage which may be formal or informal depending on the nature of the concern raised.

If you have raised a concern, we will, as far as possible, keep you informed of the decisions made and the outcome of any enquiries or investigations carried out. However, we will not be able to inform you of any matters which would infringe our duty of confidentiality to others.

The reported malpractice will be reviewed and further information from the whistleblower will be requested if required.

If deemed necessary, a malpractice case will be opened. We will contact all parties necessary to pursue the investigation. If appropriate, we will also notify and periodically update any other Awarding Organisations affected and/or the regulator.

Upon conclusion of our investigation, we will report back to the whistleblower to confirm the action that has been taken. It should be noted that specific details may not be given on the outcomes of our investigations. CIOLQ has a responsibility to all concerned with respect to confidentiality.

Protection of whistleblowers and confidentiality

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA)

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) is intended to protect individuals who make certain disclosures of information in the public interest, allowing them to bring action in respect of any victimisation.

If an individual has made a disclosure which is protected under PIDA the individual has a right not to be subject to detrimental treatment or a breach of their employment contract because of that protected disclosure.

Confidentiality

Concerns will be treated seriously and actions taken in accordance with this policy. If you ask us to treat the matter in confidence, we will do our utmost to respect your request. CIOLQ will always aim to keep the identity of any whistleblower confidential.

However, if you make the decision not to tell us who you are it will be far harder for us to investigate the matter fully or give you feedback. Additionally, whilst we will consider anonymous reports, it may be more difficult for you to be protected under PIDA where there is no evidence that it is you who has made the disclosure.

If concerns are raised, we give whistleblowers assurance that we will not intentionally cause the whistleblower to suffer reprisal or victimisation as a direct result of their actions.

Whistleblowers should be aware that the details and nature of their disclosure may inevitably lead to their identification in the course of any subsequent investigation, in instances such as:

- Criminal investigations, including fraud
- Court proceedings
- Another person to whom we are required by law to disclose identities

Policy updating and reviewing

All policies relating to CIOLQ will be updated on an 18-month cycle or sooner as required.

Policy version and owner

Policy review date	December 2026
Policy owner	Responsible Officer

Regulatory references

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition A1 Suitability for continuing recognition Condition A6 Identification and management of risks Condition A8 Malpractice and maladministration
Qualifications Wales
Condition A1 Suitability for continuing recognition Condition A6 Identification and management of risks Condition A8 Malpractice and maladministration