

In July 2018, the [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\) established an Independent Commission](#) to investigate exam malpractice in both general and vocational assessments.

Under the chairmanship of Sir John Dunford, the membership of the Commission was drawn from a wide range of education experts representing higher education, further education, secondary schools, school governors and examinations and assessment organisations. The four national examinations regulators – Council for Curriculum, Education and Assessment in Northern Ireland (CCEA), Ofqual, Qualifications Wales (QW) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) – together with Ofsted, acted as observers at Commission meetings. The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO), which is not a member of the JCQ, was an observer from March 2019 onwards.

The Exams Office was the only organisation present which represented the exams officer community, and we are delighted that many of the recommendations in the final report, which was published on 10 September 2019, recognise the role, status and importance of exams officers in maintaining an effective examination process and preventing malpractice.

Below is a summary of the key findings of the final report based upon key staff involved in the management, administration and conducting of examinations.

Heads of centre/senior leaders/governing boards

The Commission has clearly identified expectations regarding the role and responsibilities of heads of centre, senior leaders responsible for examinations, and governing boards/bodies.

There is a call for additional support and training for heads of centre and senior leaders in order to ensure the more effective management of examinations and exams officers within their centre.

There is also a requirement for the JCQ and awarding organisations to improve communications, prioritise information and provide online training for heads of centre.

The report is clear in its expectation that *'Heads of centre should build and maintain an ethical culture in which malpractice by students and staff does not take place. Such a culture of honesty and openness should enable staff and students to report matters of concern.'* There is an expectation of heads of centre to *'take the lead in their institutions on preventing malpractice'* and to *'strive to create a culture in their institutions in which integrity in assessment is promoted and malpractice by staff and students in centre-based assessment does not take place.'*

Responsibility is also placed upon heads of centre to ensure that there are contingency plans in place for emergencies such as their exams officer resigning or being otherwise absent.

The involvement of governing bodies/boards in the examination process is long overdue, and *The Exams Office* welcomes the Commission's recommendation that governors *'should ask the head of centre whether s/he has signed and understood the significance of the NCN Declaration and should receive reports from the head of centre about the conduct of the examinations as well as the results. Members of these bodies should work closely with awarding organisations in the investigation of the circumstances of any allegations of malpractice.'*

The emphasis upon heads of centre and governing boards to ‘*create and maintain an approach to examinations that reflects an ethical culture and encourages staff and students to report their concerns*’ is further evidence that greater responsibility is being placed upon heads of centre and governors is managing the examination process within their centre.

Governing boards should support staff by ensuring that there is a clear and comprehensive whistleblowing policy.

The DfE is asked to consider the inclusion of ethical leadership of the conduct of examinations in revised versions of the standards in the next reviews of headteacher and teacher standards.

Comment

The Exams Office fully supports the Commission’s recognition that there must be a clearly defined role for heads of centre, senior leaders and governors in managing examinations within their centre. The Head of centre has overall responsibility for examinations in their centre and the Commission’s recommendations ensure that all heads of centre and senior leaders not only meet their responsibilities, but also create the correct ethos in relation to integrity and creating an appropriate ethical culture, in addition to providing adequate support for exams officers.

The Exams Office is providing the following to address the Commission’s recommendations:

- Working in conjunction with ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders) to deliver face-to-face training for senior leaders with responsibility for examinations
- Launching a senior leader/line manager online examination training and assessment module

Exams officers

The Commission has clearly highlighted the role and importance of exams officers.

There is recognition that whilst ‘*Examinations officers have a critical role to play in reducing malpractice in centres, their role has increased in recent years and they need to be well trained, well supported, have high status and good facilities in centres, and have pay and conditions that aid successful recruitment.*’

The Commission recommends that:

- Exams officers are well supported by the JCQ, awarding organisations and centres
- Exams officers have sufficiently high status in centres
- The pay and conditions of exams officers should be sufficient to recruit well
- Exams officers should have good facilities to carry out their role
- The job descriptions of exams officers should reflect the role accurately
- Centres should have succession plans in place for exams officers

In all centres, exams officers should be line-managed and actively supported by a senior member of staff with good knowledge of the examinations system, with annual appraisals, linked to suitable

training opportunities.

The Commission has also called for exams officer training to be subject to a 'Quality Mark system', run by JCQ to eliminate 'rogue' trainers/training companies issuing incorrect information which encourages malpractice.

To raise the status of exams officers there is a recommendation for a non-mandatory, professional qualification for exams officers, approved by awarding organisations through the JCQ. The JCQ, in consultation with the exams officer community, are also required to consider establishing a training and qualification framework for exams officers.

To support exams officers in improving processes within their centre and to learn from the experience of the wider exams community, the JCQ are encouraged to produce a retrospective report on the administration of each examination season.

To utilise the positives of online support and information sharing, there is a call for JCQ regulations to be available on an easily searchable interactive website.

With regard to contingency planning, heads of centre should ensure that their centre has plans in place for emergencies such as their exams officer resigning or being otherwise absent.

Comment

The recommendations made by the Commission are very much welcomed by *The Exams Office* and the wider exams officer community. Not only has a suggested national job description been devised, but this has been referenced and recognised by the Commission. It has been evaluated by UNISON under the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) job evaluation scheme. It matches to the role profile 'Examinations Officer level 2' with a score of 439. This score would need to be fitted into an agreed pay and grading structure locally but paves the way for exams officers to acquire remuneration which is reflective of the importance of the role.

The Commission has also recognised the role of exams officers and that their status, including pay and conditions, should be recognised, as well as more formal recognition with the introduction of an 'exams officer qualification'. There is also a requirement for effective line management and appraisal within centres.

The Exams Office is providing the following to address the Commission's recommendations:

- A suggested exams officer (and invigilator) job description
- Working in conjunction with organisations which represent heads of centre and senior leaders to raise the profile of exams officers
- The launch of an 'industry recognised' exams officer annual qualification/endorsement
- More effective and appropriate representation for exams officers
- The launch of an online portal which will contain the following tools to support the management, administration and conducting of examinations within centres:
 - Invigilator Training and Assessment Module
 - New Exams Officer Induction Module (to be available early-2020)

- Senior Leaders/Line Managers Training and Assessment Module (to be available early-2020)
- Exams officer qualification - an annual endorsement/qualification (to be available mid-2020)
- Exams Policy Generator
- Key tasks and documents annual/termly toolkit
- Exams Timetable Tool
- Key Dates Calendar Tool

Invigilators

There is a clear recognition within the Commission's report of the role played by invigilators in preventing malpractice during the conducting of examinations. Although JCQ regulations clearly state the role of an invigilator, measuring and recording the understanding of regulations by invigilators is currently not mandatory. The recommendation made by the Commission's addresses this and the lack of a national training programme for invigilators:

- The level of invigilator training should be considered and, if necessary, increased and made mandatory. The understanding and competence of invigilators should be tested more rigorously

Comment

The Exams Office continues to emphasise the importance of invigilators in preventing malpractice and ensuring that examinations are conducted in line with JCQ regulations. We welcome the Commission's emphasis on ensuring that the understanding of regulations is recorded.

The Exams Office has provided the following to address the Commission's recommendations:

- Updating our Invigilator training and assessment module with the following units:
 - Unit 1 - Training for new invigilators
 - Unit 2 – Invigilating on-screen tests
 - Unit 3 - 2019/2020 regulation changes for experienced invigilators
 - Unit 4 – Access arrangements (for invigilators supervising candidates and facilitators supporting candidates)
- The module also has additional reporting functionality to allow centres to address areas of strength and weakness amongst their invigilators

Teachers

The Commission has recognised that teachers are entering the profession with little or no knowledge of examination processes and therefore there is an increased risk of unintentional malpractice. The recommendations include:

- Initial teacher training, training for newly qualified teachers, senior management training and management training in workplaces should all include training on the purposes of

assessment, conducting examinations and assessments with integrity and taking an ethical approach to the delivery of qualifications

- Initial teacher training courses should include material on good practice in the conduct of examinations

Comment

The Exams Office is providing the following to address the Commission's recommendations (available late 2020):

- The development of an online training and assessment module for students of initial teacher training
- The introduction of a PowerPoint and video presentation to use with newly qualified teachers

Summary

The Exams Office would like to congratulate Sir John Dunford for his leadership of the JCQ's Independent Malpractice Commission. We would also like to thank Mick Walker for the outstanding research which has underpinned the recommendations in the final report.

Not only does the Commission identify and address the underlying causes of malpractice, but there is also clear recognition of the role played by exams officers, and more importantly, recommendations which improve the status of exams officers – in relation to the significance of the role, pay and conditions, and support within their centre from the head of centre and/or senior Leaders.

The Exams Office is delighted that all of our suggestions have been included within the final report. As the only organisation representing the exams officer community, we recognised this as an opportunity to acquire support from a wide range of education experts and organisations – including the regulators of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – in supporting our aim of supporting exams officers in their everyday role.

This Commission has provided a unique opportunity to deliver the improvements for the exams officer community which other organisations have failed to deliver. It is now that the work begins in delivering the outcomes contained within the Commission's final report.

The Exams Office is already working to deliver these outcomes – see above for details of the support, online tools and initiatives we are launching over the coming 12 months – but more importantly, we are engaging with other member organisations of the Commission to deliver long term benefit to our members and the wider exams officer community.

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