

The examples below set out how examination centres manage the potential conflict of interest of having teaching staff engaged in writing public examination questions. It provides a good overview of the thought process that schools/colleges have gone through and the practical arrangements they have put in place. We hope they are useful in helping you think about the potential risks and the actions you should be taking.

Example 1

Guidance to teachers who carry out work for Awarding Organisations

1. Introduction

Our centre supports staff who work for Awarding Organisations (exam boards). Such work is professionally fulfilling, provides opportunities for career development, and helps ensure the high quality operation of the public exams system on which thousands of candidates and schools depend for fair and accurate results. An in depth understanding of the marking process and nuances of mark schemes are of direct teaching and learning benefit to both teachers and students.

2. Categories of examination duty

There are broadly four categories of examining duties.

- A. Teachers involved in the preparation of exam papers (question setting, reviewing, vetting) – i.e. teachers who see question papers before an exam is sat.
- B. Teachers who mark public exams but who only see question papers and scripts after the exam has been sat (e.g. assistant examiners).
- C. Staff involved in checking examination material prior to the exam (e.g. exams officers, lab technicians for practicals, etc.).
- D. Teachers involved in the marking and moderation of internally assessed coursework.

Teachers involved in category A and B work are required to register this work with the Deputy Head/Deputy Principal (teaching and learning). Teachers who carry out category A work must obtain the express approval of the Head/Principal who will meet with such teachers to discuss the starred items in section 4, below.

All staff involved in category A, B, C, and D public exam work must follow all centre, exam board, JCQ and regulator regulations in full. The integrity of the exam process is critical and no actions should be taken that either undermine, or appear to undermine, the fairness and integrity of public exam assessment. The centre and its staff must maintain the highest professional standards at all times.

3. Whistle blowing

Anyone concerned about the integrity of any aspect of the public exams process should raise these concerns with the relevant authority in the exam board / JCQ / regulator. Concerns about the conduct of exams at the school/college should be raised with the Head of Centre and the Exams Officer. If a concern relates to the Head of Centre then the Chair of Governors should be contacted. Concerns should be addressed in a reasonable and timely fashion; if they are not, the concern should be escalated in accordance with the school/college Whistleblowing Policy.

4. **Category A work**

Teachers who are involved in the production, review and checking of examination material prior to assessment undertake work that is essential to the smooth and accurate running of the public exams system. However, they also face conflicts of interest that require very careful management to preserve the integrity of the exams system and safeguard the professional standards and reputations of teachers and their schools or colleges. All category A work must be done in accordance with exam board / JCQ / regulator regulations. Where exam boards provide training for how to manage conflicts of interest, staff must complete this training to protect themselves and the integrity of the public exam system.

Above and beyond the requirements of exam board / JCQ / regulators, **category A teachers must follow the relevant starred practical measures below**. These measures are based on many years of teachers' examiner experience.

- a* Do not inform pupils and parents of category A work. Keeping exam setting / checking work confidential (but notifying the school/college and appropriate colleagues of such work) safeguards against student and / or parent questioning / intrusion.
- b* Always set past examination questions, or questions that are on publicly available sample papers.
- c* Always cover the whole specification (where appropriate); never question-spot.
- d* Never discuss future examinations with students, parents, and / or colleagues.
- e* All internal assessment papers should be set by a member of the department not involved in setting public exam papers.
- f* Never give any indication of what is in a future paper, by suggesting what, or what not, to revise.
- g* Where students write essays, ensure there is an explicit and transparent mechanism for the choice of essay, e.g. essays chosen by pupils or other department staff.
- h* Do not use school/college IT resources for any category A work.
- i* Never complete category A work in school/college.
- j* Examination advice given to students should be based only on material which is available to all centres (e.g. examiners' reports, mark schemes, etc.).
- k* Category A staff should withdraw from any discussion that could lead to a conflict of interest – for example the contents of a revision schedule.
- l* Staff with any concerns about the integrity of their category A work, or conflicts of interest arising, should protect themselves and the exams system by raising such concerns with the exam board. If in doubt proactively report.

The starred practical guidance can limit a teacher's ability to discharge his / her teaching and departmental duties. This is especially so if the category A worker is a head of department, or works in a smaller department where there may not be sufficient other colleagues to fill workload gaps created by a 'conflicted' member of staff. In such circumstances it may not be possible for a teacher to carry out category A work; they may instead carry out category B roles. This will be discussed with the Head/Principal as part of the approval process.

5. **Attending examiner meetings / completing examination work**

Whilst we actively encourage and support teachers who undertake public exam work, it is important that this additional 'private' work does not compromise teaching, pastoral, administrative and extra-curricular duties.

Teachers must endeavour to minimise their time out of school for examiners' meetings and ensure there is minimal disruption to their work for the school.

Example 2

Policy with respect to staff involvement with public examinations

Our centre has a duty, as a registered Examination Centre for one or more of the UK awarding organisations (exam boards), to uphold the integrity of public examinations. As with other instances of examination maladministration, the sharing of confidential material relating to any current or future ("live") public examination series by a member of staff is likely to constitute gross misconduct that is likely to result in dismissal.

We also recognise that a number of current staff are engaged by exam boards in various capacities for the setting, marking, moderating and reviewing of public examinations and, thereby, contribute to the public good. However, those staff may be involved in delivering the same examination specifications to pupils at the school/college. Such staff owe duties to the centre to prepare pupils properly for their public examinations but also to the relevant examination board to preserve the integrity of public examinations. In fulfilling these potentially conflicting duties, staff must act with **utmost integrity** and take care to manage the potential conflict of interest by ensuring that examination security is not breached in any way, whether deliberately or otherwise. Such staff must remain neutral at all times both with their colleagues and pupils.

The school/college currently only permits staff to be engaged by the exam boards on the following basis:

1. A member of staff must seek permission from the Head/principal (in his/her capacity as Head of Examination Centre) prior to undertaking any role for an examination board and must seek renewed permission from the Head/Principal each year.
2. A member of staff given permission must complete a declaration form for staff involved in public examinations and return it to the Head of Centre who will retain a Register of Staff involved.
3. A member of staff given permission must act with utmost integrity and take care to ensure that examination security is not compromised (deliberately or otherwise) and, if teaching pupils who will sit any examination of whose contents the staff member has, or will have, prior knowledge, the staff member must also sign and adhere to the school/college's internal protocol, as set out below.
4. A member of staff given permission must declare any training he or she has received from the examination board concerned and must provide details of the examination board's applicable Conflict of Interests (or other relevant) policy.

Staff must treat as confidential the identity of fellow staff involved in examining and must not discuss or speculate on such topics with pupils.

Members of staff who are concerned that examination maladministration may have occurred must notify the Head of Examination Centre *immediately*.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Protocol for staff privy to Confidential Information relating to the contents of any Public Examination sat by any pupil of the school/college.

The sharing of confidential material relating to any current or future (“live”) public examination series by a member of staff is likely to constitute gross misconduct that is likely to result in dismissal. It is prohibited by school policy. It is also prohibited by the Conflict of Interests policies of the various exam boards.

It is incumbent on any member of staff privy to confidential information about public examinations to ensure that they maintain a position of complete neutrality and do not either advantage or disadvantage pupils in the school/college. Staff must ensure the examination syllabus (specification) is covered in full but must also ensure that *specific material* used in upcoming public examinations is not used in their teaching at the centre or to guide departmental schemes of work.

The aim of this protocol is to put in place measures to prevent the *accidental* sharing of confidential public examination material within the school/college and, thereby, to protect both the staff member concerned and pupils from allegations of examination maladministration or malpractice.

When a member of staff knows in advance the content (in whole or in part) of any public examination which is to be sat by any pupil, that staff member must not:

1. set any internal exam or revision material for that public examination;
2. save any confidential public examination material on any computer that the staff member uses for teaching or for any other school/college activity without ensuring that that material is stored in a password protected area;
3. bring into public areas within the school/college public examination related paper-work, products or materials on which the staff member has worked, or use departmental printers or photocopiers for such materials;
4. use, in the creation of live public examination papers, specific content which the staff member or a member of his department has created for pupils in current or previous years, or which might be used by colleagues;
5. adapt his or her teaching to fit the questions that the staff member knows are coming up in a “live” public examination (e.g. by spending extra time on a topic, or by covering a topic with a particular slant). The member of staff must adhere to agreed departmental schemes of work;
6. engage in “question spotting” or make any predictions about the contents of the public examination to any pupil or colleague;
7. invigilate any examination in an examination series in respect of which he or she has knowledge;
8. divulge to pupils his or her role with the examination board.