

Policy statement on safeguarding children and adults at risk

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Produced on behalf of:



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Introduction

Purpose

This policy sets out JCQ's and its members' commitment to the principles of safeguarding.

Being clear about an organisation's approach to safeguarding issues and providing routes through which those working for or with an organisation can raise concerns is a means through which steps can be taken to protect the vulnerable in our society, particularly those less able to speak out for themselves.

This document contains the nine standards of safeguarding for children and adults at risk of harm that the JCQ awarding bodies have agreed to adopt. They are based on Government guidance.

Awarding bodies will need to devise processes which suit their specific circumstances and operations.

This document is for:

These principles have been adopted by the JCQ awarding bodies. They should be read and implemented by staff in the awarding bodies, particularly those who have overall responsibility for safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm.

Centres may also find it useful to read this document to understand the commitments awarding bodies have made.

This document is not intended to ensure the awarding bodies' compliance with the relevant legislation.

Who are the awarding bodies?

The JCQ consists of eight awarding bodies

- AQA
- City & Guilds
- CCEA
- NCFE
- OCR
- Pearson
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
- WJEC

Through JCQ, they work together to develop common standards, regulations and guidance for examinations and assessments for the benefit of candidates and centres across the UK.

1 Roles and responsibilities

What do awarding bodies do?

The main aim of awarding bodies is to provide qualifications and support to meet the needs of individuals and society. In delivering these products and services, the awarding bodies have a role in ensuring the welfare of candidates taking their assessments.

Behind each certificate issued there are a number of activities, products and services that are key to the delivery of courses and ultimately to candidates achieving their certificates. Some of these activities are undertaken by permanent staff employed by awarding bodies; others by people who are contracted in a variety of ways. For the purposes of this policy, those who are contracted, and not permanently employed by awarding bodies, are referred to as 'representatives'.

There are four key areas in which safeguarding issues may be raised in relation to the work of awarding bodies:

- the conduct of awarding body permanent staff or representatives towards candidates, other children and vulnerable adults with whom they come into contact, whether in person or online;
- the appropriateness of assessment materials;
- candidate disclosure of information regarding their personal welfare, or the welfare of one of their peers, to the permanent staff or representative of the awarding body, whether directly or through written responses or on social media;
- concerns raised about the safeguarding governance or practice within a centre. This could arise from a centre inspection, when raising a safeguarding concern with a centre or through an allegation made by centre staff, candidates or parents.

The awarding bodies have committed to ensuring that all their permanent staff and representatives are aware of safeguarding issues for children and adults at risk of harm in a manner appropriate to their role. The awarding body must have effective mechanisms in place to record and monitor safeguarding issues and ensure that appropriate action is taken. These mechanisms will provide that:

Cases not relating to the conduct of a member of permanent staff or representative involve formal reporting to the centre and/or the relevant protection authority. The awarding body should ensure that the issues have been acknowledged and ask for confirmation of this from the organisation to which the referral was made.

Cases involving the conduct of awarding body permanent staff are formally investigated and dealt with in line with the awarding body's documented disciplinary procedures, including discussion with the appropriate protection authorities if appropriate.

Cases involving the conduct of awarding body representatives are formally investigated, including discussion with the appropriate statutory protection authorities if appropriate, and dealt with in line with the terms and conditions of their contracts.

What do centres do?

A centre is the place where a candidate will undertake study, training and assessment.

Awarding bodies are very conscious of safeguarding issues and are committed to ensuring the safety of children and adults at risk of harm. However, the awarding bodies generally have no direct contact with candidates. It is the centres that have direct contact with candidates and therefore it is the centres that have primary responsibility for the welfare of their candidates, progressing and resolving issues and raising awareness generally.

To maximise the effectiveness of all measures to protect children and adults at risk of harm taking qualifications, it is vital that awarding bodies work in partnership with centres. This will ensure a clear understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities.

Every centre should have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Safeguarding concerns should be referred to them or their deputies to ensure a swift and effective response.

The roles and responsibilities of centres **in England** are defined in:

Keeping children safe in education – Statutory guidance for schools and colleges (Department for Education, September 2022) **and** *Keeping children safe in education for school and college staff* (part 1) **and** *Working together to safeguard children*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

The roles and responsibilities of centres **in Wales** are defined in *Keeping Learners Safe*:

<https://gov.wales/keeping-learners-safe>

The roles and responsibilities of centres **in Northern Ireland** are defined in the Department of Education's Publications on General Child Protection Issues:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/publications-and-guidance-child-protection-issues-schools>

2 Definitions

JCQ uses definitions of the term 'safeguarding' from statutory guidance.

Safeguarding children is defined in *Working together to safeguard children* (see above) as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

A child is any person who has not reached the age of 18.

An adult at risk of harm is used in this policy to mean an adult who by virtue of a physical or mental impairment or circumstances is at risk of physical or mental harm.

3 Specific principles of safeguarding for children and adults at risk of harm

The awarding bodies have examined their working environments (including who they work with and how, when, where and under what circumstances permanent staff or representatives work with candidates and interact with them) and the products and services they offer.

The nine principles which follow are recognised as essential steps in developing a safeguarding policy for children and adults at risk of harm. The principles are organised in this document in the order in which they should be addressed.

The overall quality of a safeguarding policy is dependent on it being:

- well-implemented;
- well-operated; and
- well-managed.

Principle 1 A safeguarding policy

An awarding body will have a safeguarding policy in place.

Principle 2 Procedures and systems

An awarding body will have clearly defined reporting procedures and response mechanisms that ensure safeguarding responsibilities are met. This will include a designated Safeguarding Officer. At the same time, so far as this is possible given those safeguarding responsibilities, an awarding body will ensure that obligations of confidentiality (reassuring all concerned that the matter will be dealt with sensitively and appropriately) are respected.

Principle 3 Prevention

An awarding body will adopt measures to minimise the risk of abuse by any person it retains to engage in any activity in relation to its qualifications.

Principle 4 Codes of behaviour

An awarding body will have in place *Codes of behaviour* that set out acceptable standards of behaviour and good practice for staff and representatives.

Principle 5 Implementation

An awarding body will give clear guidance to permanent staff and representatives on how the safeguarding policy will be adapted and applied.

Principle 6 Equality and inclusion

In accordance with equality legislation, in the exercise of its function of developing and awarding qualifications, an awarding body must have due regard to the need to combat discrimination and ensure procedures are equitably applied to all children and adults at risk of harm.

Principle 7 Communication

An awarding body will make their safeguarding policy publicly available. The policy will be regularly reviewed, taking into account comments from appropriate stakeholders.

Principle 8**Education and training**

An awarding body will provide appropriate initial and refresher training and development opportunities to staff and representatives.

Principle 9**Monitoring**

An awarding body will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of their safeguarding policy.

Summary

Through these nine principles, JCQ and its members seek to ensure that they can develop and promote practice which safeguards the vulnerable in society from abuse and exploitation. They additionally seek to meet regulatory and legislative requirements.

These principles of safeguarding are the responsibility of the designated staff within the awarding bodies. JCQ anticipates that these principles will be reviewed annually and/or whenever there is a significant change in the awarding body or in relevant protection legislation, policy or guidance.