



UK MEDIATION

**Assessment,
Internal Verification , Malpractice, and
Complaints Policy & Procedure**

Assessment, internal verification, malpractice and complaints policy

Assessment and feedback are two of the most important aspects of the Company's commitment to high quality learning and training. There are clear links between the choice of assessment, the quality of feedback and the achievement of learners. It is expected that assessments will be appropriate for their purpose and that feedback will be timely, and support the learning process.

Assessment has a double purpose. It is the summative process by which the company is able to confirm that a learner has achieved the learning outcomes and standards for the course on which they are registered. It also acts as a strong formative tool to support and assist learners learning and development.

This policy will provide guidelines for all courses in relation to setting assessment, marking, and moderation and will provide the reference for the quality assurance of assessment practice.

Principles of Assessment

Curriculum Development Teams will ensure that the core principles of UK Mediation's Assessment Strategy inform the design, implementation and management of all assessment activities within the company. This process will be monitored through a number of mechanisms; assessment outcomes; Learner feedback; trainer feedback; internal and external verification; and moderation. The outcomes will be reported on in annual course monitoring. The Head of Training will be responsible for overseeing the process and assuring the Course Delivery Team of the quality and standards of assessment activities.

Aims and Objectives of the policy

Aims

UK Mediation Ltd is committed to ensuring that standards of assessment are consistent, transparent and in line with the requirements of our awarding/ registering bodies. The way learners' work is assessed must serve the stated learning objectives of the programmes we offer and facilitate the achievement and wider development of our learners.

The policy supports tutors, assessors, learners, internal and external verifiers and moderators engaged in the assessment process.

Objectives

To assess learners work with integrity by being consistent and transparent in our assessment judgements and processes so that the outcomes are fair, reliable and valid.

To ensure that assessment standards and specifications are implemented fully (both in spirit and in letter), so that no risk is posed to the reputation of the awarding bodies or the accredited courses we offer.

To establish quality control and recording mechanisms for assignments and their assessment through a system of sampling, internal verification, moderation, and cross-departmental co-ordination as appropriate to the requirements of the courses we offer.

To provide learner-centred approaches to assessment, which provide opportunities for learners to achieve at levels commensurate with the demands of their course.

Range and scope of the policy.

The range of the policy covers all AIM Awards accredited courses offered by UK Mediation Ltd but may well apply to other assignment-based courses should they become a part of the curriculum in the future.

1. Assessment

Internal Assessment is defined as the process where trainers make judgements on evidence produced by learners against required criteria for the AIM Awards accreditation. *All company devised assessment materials must be internally and externally verified before being issued to learners.*

Completed learner portfolios will be assessed internally, be subject to internal verification and external verification by the awarding body and may include, on occasion, registering bodies. Learners must be left in no doubt that any assessment outcome awarded will be subject to internal and/or external scrutiny, (verification) and that ultimately the final decision rests with the awarding body.

The Assessor is responsible for ensuring that assessment processes are consistent and transparent, that evidence is valid, sufficient, and authentic and that judgement of evidence is valid and reliable.

Learners will be given a deadline for the submission of their portfolio. On assessment the outcome will be recorded on the individual Learner Assessment Form. The assessment decisions are then internally verified according to the procedure outlined below.

All coursework must be handed in on the stated date. Late submissions will not be assessed. Recommendations to progress successful achievement will be offered to the learners who do not meet the deadline.

Extension requests would be considered when the personal circumstances of the learner disadvantage his/her opportunity to complete the portfolio in comparison to other learners.

If a learner is *Yet to Achieve* following assessment, the Learner will be offered one further opportunity to re-submit his/her work within a specified deadline. The re-submitted work will then be re-assessed.

UK Mediation Ltd will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that learners with disabilities will be provided with equivalent opportunities to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes, for example via the use of alternative assessment arrangements. Where study is interrupted as a direct result of a disability-related causes this should not unjustifiably impede a learner's subsequent progress on the course.

Feedback

Feedback encompasses assessor's comments on a learner's performance in an assessment component, including comments on their achievement. Feedback may be given on a formative basis during the course delivery. Types of feedback include, but may not be limited to:

- Individual oral feedback.
- Group oral feedback.
- Individualised comments.

- Detailed assessment guidance.
- Generic feedback.

Summative feedback would be given in writing on the OCSAF and the LAF to the learner.

Feedback should:

- Promote learning, enabling learners to learn from the assessment and improve their performance in subsequent re-submission.
- Be linked to assessment criteria.
- Be appropriate to the nature of the assessment activity.
- Provide a learner with an understanding of the way in which their outcome was derived and the level of their success in meeting the assessed learning outcomes; it should also provide them with an indication of areas for improvement in the future.
- Be returned within a time period that takes into account the turnaround time required to ensure fair and rigorous marking and moderation

In all events, UK Mediation Ltd aims to return the assessment outcome and the assessor's comments to learners within six weeks of the submission deadline.

Feedback will be provided on a feedback proforma (the LAF and OCSAF). This allows an assessor to lay out how a learner has met the learning outcomes being assessed by that assessment.

Role of the Assessor

The role of the Assessor is to:

- Provide opportunities which allow learners to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do so that they have opportunities to achieve successfully.
- Ensure that learners are clear about the criteria they are expected to meet in their portfolios and that they are fully briefed on the skills which need to be demonstrated during the course.
- Encourage learners by giving detailed feedback and guidance on how to improve their work.
- Set clear deadlines and advise learners on the appropriate amount of time to spend on the work, ensuring it is commensurate with the credit available.
- Mark and return portfolios within two weeks of the submission deadline.
- Adhere to the Awarding Body's specification in the assessment of learner portfolios.

- Record outcomes of assessment using appropriate documentation (see appendix). Outcomes will be held secure for three years, measured from the point of course start date. Associated IV records should also be kept, to support and verify the decisions that were made for the cohort.
- Ensure each learner has signed the registration form to confirm that the work is their own and that it is endorsed by the assessor after marking the portfolio. A completed original document must be securely attached to the portfolio of each learner and to that of each sample request.
- Provide accurate records of internally assessed portfolio outcomes to AIM Awards in a timely manner via the RAC.

2. Internal Verification

The Internal Verifier is at the heart of quality assurance on AIM Awards courses. The role is to ensure that internally assessed work consistently meets specified standards but can also lead to staff development and quality improvement.

Each course will have an identified Internal Verifier (IV) who is not otherwise involved in the assessing or training for the course.

Internal Verifiers will have the knowledge and qualifications relevant to the course(s) and other competence-based award(s) for which they are responsible to enable accurate judgements to be made regarding learner performance in relation to competence criteria.

Provision will be made for communication between course teams to share 'best practice' and areas of concern. Typically, this will be achieved through the Trainer Evaluation Form; the Internal Verification Form and formal observations and a minimum of one annual meeting of assessors, trainers, and Internal Verifiers at which standards and processes are discussed to maximise consistency between courses.

The role of the internal verifier:

The internal verifier should:

- Not verify their own assessment or portfolios.
- Ensure that all assignment briefs are verified as fit for purpose prior to their being circulated to learners. They should enable learners to meet the unit grading criteria.
- Complete the Internal Verifier Form and make recommendations to the assessor on how to improve the quality of the brief if necessary.
- Make all IV evidence available to the EV
- Plan with the Training Development Team an appropriate schedule to consider the assessment decisions of all units and all assessors, to judge whether the assessor has assessed accurately against the unit criteria
- Verify 20% of the sample, though this proportion could be higher, particularly for assessors who are new to AIM Awards or UK Mediation Ltd.
- Consider alternative methods of moderation/verification as required for non-written (ephemeral) assessments (e.g. assessments of performance,). In most cases the documentary record of the assessor(s) on the OCSAF, and occasional observations will provide the basis for verification.
- Maintain secure records of all work sampled as part of their verification process using an Internal Verification Form.
- If a concern is raised the IV should discuss this with the assessor prior to the final confirmation of the assessment outcome for all the learners submitting portfolios in that particular cohort. As a result of the IV process it may be necessary for the assessor(s) to reconsider the

assessment outcome awarded for the entire cohort of learners and, as a consequence, to make changes either to all outcomes or to some outcomes.

- Where re-sampling is necessary the work should be verified again before being finalised and records kept.

Responsibility

Responsible for Policy: Managing Director and Head of Training

Responsible for implementation: Course Trainers/ Assessors, IVs and Head of Training.

It is the responsibility of trainers/ assessors to:

- Provide assessment processes that are fair and meet the requirements of learners and accreditation;
- Provide learners with a schedule of assessment;
- Provide accurate, timely and informative assessment feedback to inform learners of their individual progress and tell them what they need to do to improve.
- Record assessment decisions regularly, accurately and systematically using agreed documentation,
- Comply with UK Mediation Ltd, Awarding Body and registering body guidelines regarding work that is submitted after the submission date and work that is re-submitted following a referral decision;
- Familiarise themselves and learners with UK Mediation Ltd Assessment Appeals procedure(s)
- Be aware of and keep up-to-date with Awarding Body guidance in respect of assessment, standardisation, moderation and verification.

Internal verifiers are responsible for :

- Verifying assignment briefs prior to distribution to learners
- Verifying a sample of assessment decisions

- Ensure that the quality of assessment is assured by carrying out internal standardisation, moderation or verification as required by the Company and Awarding Body.
- Record internal standardisation, moderation and verification decisions accurately and systematically using agreed documentation,
- Provide adjustments for learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities according to company's requirements.
- Developing the skills of assessors, especially those new to assessment.
- Maintaining the consistency of assessment decisions by holding standardisation meetings of assessors

It is the responsibility of the Awarding Body:

- To regulate the IV process
- To meet the deadlines for registering learners with the awarding body
- To ensure that awarding body data is kept up to date with timely withdrawal or transfer of learners
- To claim learners' certificates as soon as appropriate

It is the responsibility of the Head of Training to act as Quality Nominee for UK Mediation Ltd, to act as a conduit for information from awarding bodies to course teams, and to ensure standardisation of processes and documentation across the programmes.

Authentication of Candidate's Work

Learners must submit a signed registration form confirming that the work he/she will submit will be their own and provide an e-mail address from which they intend to submit their portfolio. Trainers/ assessors should confirm that the work assessed is solely that of the learner concerned.

If the learner hands in a portfolio and the assessor suspects it is not the learners own work, the matter should be reported to the Head of Training who must proceed in accordance with the company's malpractice policy.

3. Malpractice

3.1 Learner Malpractice

Malpractice covers a range of offences, which can be collectively described as cheating. The following is not an exhaustive list and UK Mediation Ltd reserves the right to include any other type of cheating under the terms of this policy.

Plagiarism: taking someone else's work, images or ideas, whether published or not, and with or without their permission, and passing them off as one's own: thereby not properly acknowledging the original source. This particularly relates to material downloaded from the Internet or copied from books

Copying the work of other learners with or without their permission and knowingly, allowing another learner to copy one's own work.

Colluding with other learners to produce work, this is then submitted individually (except where this is specifically required/allowed by the assessment criteria).

Falsely claiming extenuating circumstances to gain an unfair advantage in assessment outcomes.

Submitting work done by another learner as one's own.

Preventing Learner Malpractice

The Company will take positive steps to prevent and reduce the occurrence of malpractice by learners. These will include:

Using the induction period and the Learner Guidance to inform learners of UK Mediations policy on malpractice and consequent penalties.

Showing learners the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources including websites, if and when this is appropriate. However, the submitted work must show evidence that the learner has interpreted and synthesised appropriate information and has acknowledged any sources used.

Introducing procedures for assessing work in a way that reduces or identifies malpractice, e.g. **plagiarism, impersonation, collusion and disruption**. These procedures may include:

- Reviewing assessment assignments/tasks/tools on a regular basis.
- The assessor assessing work for a single assignment/ task in a single session for the complete cohort of learners.
- Assessors getting to know their learners' styles and abilities throughout their written portfolio work and during the course if the opportunity allows.
- Setting tasks and encouraging learners to consider and include answers that specifically relate to their own work setting and practice, and personal reflections that correlate to their performance during the on-course skills assessment.
- Electronic methods of detecting malpractice can be used to verify authenticity and to inform a judgement.

Investigating Learner Malpractice

There will be an investigation if learner malpractice is suspected which may lead to disciplinary action.

Learners who attempt to gain an award by deceitful means will automatically have their result(s) suspended (held) pending a thorough investigation by a member of the Management Team. The Learner will be informed at the earliest opportunity of the nature of the alleged malpractice and of the possible consequences.

The outcome of the investigation will determine the appropriate course of action to be taken by UK Mediation Ltd. Malpractice is a breach of company policy and may invoke the Learner Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Any case where learner malpractice is found to be substantiated will be recorded noting the description of the malpractice; the outcome of any investigations; and the final decision. Records will be maintained for a period of 3 years.

If no evidence is found that the learner cheated, then the benefit of the doubt should be given to the learner and the assessment outcome should be awarded.

Appeals Procedures

It is the responsibility of UK Mediation Ltd as an assessment centre, to make all learners aware of the appeals procedure and give them access to a copy of the procedure.

The Managing Director is responsible for managing the formal appeals process. If deemed necessary, a formal appeals panel should be set up comprising at least three people, where at least one member is independent of the assessment process.

Written records of all appeals will be maintained by UK Mediation Ltd. These should include a description of the appeal, the outcome of the appeal and the reason for that outcome.

Grounds for Appeal

A learner would have grounds for appeal against an assessment decision in the following situations. This list is selective and not exhaustive.

- The work is not assessed according to the set criteria or the criteria are ambiguous.
- The internal verification procedure contradicts the assessment outcome awarded.
- There is evidence of preferential treatment towards other learners.
- The conduct of the assessment did not conform to the published requirements of the Awarding Body.
- Valid, agreed, extenuating circumstances were not taken into account at the time of assessment, which UK Mediation Ltd was aware of prior to the submission deadline.
- Agreed deadlines were not observed by staff.
- The current assessment plan was not adhered to.
- The decision to reject the portfolio on the grounds of malpractice.

Formal Appeal Procedures

If, after informal discussion with the Internal Verifier, the candidate wishes to make a formal appeal, the candidate must ask the Internal Verifier, in writing, for a re-assessment. This must be done within 10 working days of receiving the original assessment result.

The Managing Director with the Internal Verifier, on receipt of the formal appeal from the learner, will try to seek a solution negotiated between the relevant assessor and the learner. If it is not possible to reach an agreement, the Managing Director and the Internal Verifier will set a date for the Internal Verification Appeals Panel to meet.

The Internal Verification Appeals Panel will normally meet within 2 weeks of the receipt of the appeal by the Internal Verifier, with re-assessment, if deemed necessary by the panel, taking place within 15 working days of the appeals panel meeting.

The outcome of the appeal may be:

- Confirmation of original decision;
- A re-assessment by an independent assessor;
- An opportunity to resubmit for assessment within a revised agreed timescale.

3.2 Staff Malpractice

The following are examples of malpractice by UK Mediation Ltd staff. This list is not exhaustive.

- Failure to keep any awarding body mark schemes secure
- Alteration of awarding body assessment and criteria
- Assisting learners in the production of work for assessment, where the support has the potential to influence the outcomes of assessment, for example where the assistance involves UK Mediation Ltd staff producing work for the learner.
- Producing falsified statements, for example for evidence the learner has not generated or demonstrated
- Allowing evidence, this is known by the staff member not to be the learners own, to be included in a learner's portfolio.
- Failing to complete and submit a Conflict of Interest Form to AIM for approval when there is any suggestion of a potential COI.
- Facilitating and allowing impersonation
- Misusing the conditions for special learner requirements,
- Failing to keep learner work or details secure
- Falsifying records/certificates, for example by alteration, substitution, or by fraud
- Fraudulent certificate claims, that is claiming for a certificate prior to the learner completing all the requirements of assessment

Conflicts of Interest

Actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest could arise for a number of reasons as specified in UK Mediation's Conflict of Interest Declaration Form. Trainers who believe such a Conflict of Interest may exist must complete and submit a COI form for approval by AIM and must not assess, invigilate, or internally verify any candidate or their assessments until given approval by AIM.

Where staff malpractice is suspected, an investigation will take place under staff disciplinary procedures.

4. Complaints Procedure

In cases of complaint about an individual employed by, or acting on behalf of UK Mediation

Overview

This complaints procedure is an essential part of the UK Mediation's commitment to the protection of its clients/learners. This procedure, and any accompanying documents, will be communicated throughout the company, and training will be given on its content, in case any client/learner should have a complaint or allegation of malpractice about the conduct of an individual employed by UK Mediation, or acting on its behalf.

The aim is to provide a transparent route of remedy where a complaint made against an employed member of UK Mediation, or against one of its affiliates or agents, can be investigated and resolved in a transparent and fair manner, keeping the complainant informed at all stages.

Procedure

1. Raising a complaint

Any client/learner who wishes to raise a complaint or allegation of malpractice about the conduct of an employee or agent of UK Mediation should, in the first instance, direct them to the individual concerned.

In the event that this does not resolve the matter, they should write to the CEO at the following address, stating the nature of the complaint, and giving as much detail as possible:-

Dr Mike Talbot
CEO
UK Mediation Ltd
Unit 4H, Goods Wharf, Goods Road
Belper
Derbyshire UK
DE56 1UU

The CEO will acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant within 7 working days.

2. Mediation

At this point the client/learner may be asked if he/she wishes to meet informally to discuss the complaint. In many cases, mediation may be the most constructive way to address a complaint and can help with a meeting if a complainant does wish to meet the person complained against. Mediation can be used to resolve issues of interpersonal dispute, misunderstanding, miscommunication, or those relating to alleged inappropriate words or behaviour.

Mediation will be offered to the complainant and will be paid for by UK Mediation. We will offer to appoint a mediator of the complainant's choosing and will present alternatives for the complainant to choose amongst.

If there is a refusal or disinclination to discuss the matter informally, to enter into mediation, or if the complainant wishes the complaint to progress further, then the complaint will be more formally investigated.

3. Investigation

In the event that there are matters that need to be investigated further, the CEO will request a written outline of the complaint from the complainant and a written response from the person complained against. Both parties will be invited to an interview if necessary to elaborate or clarify their positions. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend if they wish and the interview may take place by telephone, video conferencing or face-to-face if appropriate.

The CEO will communicate the outcome of the investigation to the complainant. In the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may appeal in writing to the CEO, who will explain the outcome to the complainant, again meeting face-to-face if this is preferred. In the event that the face-to-face meeting requires it, as agreed by both parties, an external mediator will be brought in to facilitate.

The outcome of this meeting will be communicated to the complainant in writing.

4. Disciplinary Procedure

Should the investigation conclude that the employee is at fault, a range of measures are available to the company, and are specified under its disciplinary procedure, as follows:

Depending on the severity of the complaint, and whether there have been any previous issues with the person complained against, **informal resolution** should always be attempted prior to entering into any formal steps. In the event of a failure to resolve matters informally, however, it is Company policy that the following procedure should be followed.

The procedure provides that in normal cases a series of warnings will be given before discipline or dismissal is contemplated. The stages of the procedure that apply when discipline or dismissal is being contemplated comply with the statutory dismissal and grievance procedures as defined under UK employment law.

Matters which may be dealt with under this disciplinary and dismissal procedure include discipline and dismissal for the following reasons:

- misconduct
- sub-standard performance
- harassment or victimisation, including of learners / clients
- misuse of company facilities including computer facilities (e.g. e-mail and the Internet)
- poor timekeeping
- unauthorised absences

Minor cases of misconduct and most cases of poor performance may be dealt with by informal advice, coaching and counselling. An informal oral warning may be given, which does not count as part of the formal (or statutory) disciplinary procedure. No formal record of this type of warning will be kept.

If there is no improvement or if the matter constitutes a gross misconduct, the employee will be invited to a disciplinary meeting at which the matter can be properly discussed. The employee will be allowed to bring a work colleague or Trade Union representative to the meeting. The outcome of the meeting will be communicated to the employee. There are the following possible outcomes:

4.1 Oral warning

In the case of minor infringements the employee may be given a formal oral warning. A note of the oral warning will be kept on the employee's file but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a specified period (e.g. six months). The employee will have the right to appeal against a formal oral warning.

4.2 Written warning

If the infringement is more serious or there is no improvement in conduct after a formal oral warning the employee will be given a formal written warning giving details of the complaint, the improvement or change in behaviour required, the timescale allowed for this, the right of appeal and the fact that a final written warning may be given if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change. A copy of the written warning will be kept on file but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a specified period (e.g. 12 months).

4.3 Final written warning

Where there is a failure to improve or change behaviour during the currency of a prior formal written warning, or where the infringement is sufficiently serious, the employee may be given a final written warning. This will give details of the complaint, warn that failure to improve will lead to dismissal and refer to the right of appeal. The final written warning will be kept on file but will normally be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a specified period (e.g. 12 months).

4.4 Dismissal

If the employee's conduct or performance still fails to improve, or if the matter in question constitutes a gross misconduct, the final step will be to contemplate dismissal. If the employer is contemplating dismissing the employee he must follow the "Standard Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure" which is a statutory requirement. Failure to do so will usually result in a finding of automatically unfair dismissal.

5. Conclusion of complaint

Once mediation has been offered, an investigation and, if required, an appeal have been conducted, and if appropriate the Disciplinary Procedure has been concluded, the CEO will then inform the complainant of the outcome within 7 working days.

Should the complainant not accept the outcome at this stage, an arbitrator will be appointed from the panel of the UK Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, in order to provide binding arbitration of the dispute. The arbitration procedure shall be based on the Institute's code of practice for arbitrators.

Following the arbitrated decision, unless there is new information to be considered, or the complainant considers that their complaint or allegation has not been dealt with fairly and transparently, the process will conclude at this stage.

Otherwise, there may be, at the CEO's sole discretion, a re-visiting of the above procedure in order to ensure that all issues are addressed fairly and transparently.