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Oxford Test of English

Malpractice Policy

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out the policy and process for identifying, reporting, and dealing with malpractice on the Oxford Test of English suite of tests, comprising the Oxford Test of English, Oxford Test of English for Schools, and Oxford Test of English Advanced.
References to 'Oxford Test of English' apply to the Oxford Test of English, the Oxford Test of English for Schools, and the Oxford Test of English Advanced unless otherwise indicated.
The Oxford Test of English is produced by Oxford University Press (OUP). Further information about the Oxford Test of English can be found at www.oxfordtestofenglish.com.

2 Glossary

Approved Test Centre: an institution engaged by OUP to provide the Oxford Test of English and sell test licenses to test takers.

Approved Test Centre Handbook: the guidelines for Approved Test Centres on administering the tests.

Approved Test Centre Manager: the person responsible for registering and managing an Approved Test Centre.

Debarral: permanent exclusion of an individual from taking the Oxford Test of English.

Escalation: the process where an assessor notifies OUP of suspected malpractice via the marking system.

Inspection: Approved Test Centres are routinely inspected by OUP to ensure that test sessions are managed in accordance with the standards set out in policies and processes. Where appropriate, an Approved Test Centre may be re-inspected.

SMIT: Suspected Malpractice Investigation Team. This team is responsible for carrying out the malpractice investigation.

SMRB: Suspected Malpractice Review Board. This board determines the outcome of suspected malpractice investigations and is drawn from OUP staff who are independent of the Approved Test Centre and the Suspected Malpractice Investigation Team.

Suspected Malpractice Notification Form: the form available from www.oxfordtestofenglish.com which can be used to report suspected malpractice

Test Regulations: the rules for the tests, including test administration, taking the test and re-taking the test which can be found here.

Test Score Users: entities such as universities and employers who use the test scores as evidence of English proficiency as part of their admissions/recruitment process. **Test Session Report:** a report in the test administration system which is completed by the invigilator at the end of the test.

Test Taker Terms and Conditions: the OUP terms and conditions that are applicable to test takers.

3 Responsibilities

OUP takes test security very seriously and requires everyone involved in managing, delivering, and taking the test to demonstrate honesty and integrity.

It is the Approved Test Centre Manager's responsibility to ensure that all Approved Test Centre staff are aware of the contents of this document, and the requirement to uphold the policies, to carry out the processes in this document and to cooperate fully in any suspected malpractice investigations.

It is the test taker's responsibility to read this document, the Test Regulations and the Test Taker Terms and Conditions.

4 Standards

This policy aligns with the Association of Language Testing (ALTE) Code of Practice as set out in the Principles of Good Practice (2020), the ALTE Minimum Standards (2024), and the International Test Commission (ITC) International Guidelines on the Security of Tests, Examinations, and Other Assessments (2014). It also draws on the Joint Qualification Council (JCQ) Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures (2024).

5 Malpractice

For the purposes of this policy, the definition of 'Malpractice' is based on that of the Joint Council for Qualifications (2025). Malpractice includes maladministration and non-compliance, and refers to any act, default or practice which is a breach of the Test Regulations, Approved Test Centre Handbook, Approved Test Centre Terms and Conditions, Test Taker Terms and Conditions, or this document, which:

- gives rise to prejudice to candidates; and/or
- compromises public confidence in qualifications; and/or
- compromises, attempts to compromise or may compromise the process of assessment, the integrity of any qualification or the validity of a result or certificate; and/or
- damages the authority, reputation or credibility of OUP or Approved Test Centre or any of their employees or agents.

To ensure fairness, any alleged or suspected incidence of malpractice should always be referred to as 'suspected' unless it has been unequivocally proven to be actual malpractice. Malpractice may arise for a number of reasons: it may be intentional to gain an unfair advantage, or it may be due to ignorance or carelessness. Irrespective of the cause, suspected malpractice will be investigated, and sanctions and/or penalties will be imposed where malpractice has been found to have taken place.

5.1 Examples of malpractice

The following are examples of malpractice. The list is not exhaustive.

5.1.1 Approved Test Centre staff malpractice

- Invigilators starting a test when they have not checked the IDs (identity documents) of all the test takers
- Invigilators allowing test takers to take a test without an appropriate form of ID or accepting ID that does not meet the requirements laid out in the Approved Test Centre Handbook.
- Running a test session with insufficient number of invigilators
- Invigilators providing unsanctioned assistance to test takers
- Invigilators leaving test takers unattended
- Invigilators failing to monitor test takers throughout the test
- Invigilators not completing the Test Session Report
- Not reporting suspected or actual malpractice
- Allowing unauthorized personnel into the test centre during test sessions
- Failure to give due care and attention to security (including electronic security)
- Failing to follow OUP instructions on the use of the Oxford Test of English Safe Exam Browser (lockdown browser) as laid out in the Approved Test Centre Handbook.
- Failing to follow OUP requirements for administering the test securely as laid ou in the Approved Test Centre Handbook

5.1.2 Test taker malpractice

- Registering with false or incomplete information, such as registering with only their first name
- Copying from other test takers
- Plagiarism, defined as unacknowledged copying from, or reproduction of, third party sources or incomplete referencing (including the internet and Aġ tools).
- Communicating with other test takers during the test
- Causing disruption during a test session
- Accessing unsanctioned items such as phones or other electronic devices, or dictionaries during the test
- Having any other programs or websites running on the computer while taking the test
- Using Reasonable Adjustments inappropriately to gain an unfair advantage
- Stealing test questions, such as through photography
- Disclosing the content of the test to others in any way, such as posting memorized questions on a website, or talking to another test taker
- Using a proxy (i.e. a different person than the registered test taker) to take the test
- Falsifying a certificate or report card, or using a falsified certificate or report card
- Attempting to transfer a certificate to another individual
- Violating the retake policy by entering for the test more times than specified in the Test Regulations
- Tampering with the Approved Test Centre equipment such as the computers or headphones
- Altering results certificates.

5.1.3 Assessor malpractice

- Disclosing test content, for example when reporting technical issues on the marking platform
- Copying a test taker response

5.1.4 Item writer malpractice

- Preparing test content in a public space, such as on a train or in a café

6 Policy review

This policy is reviewed on an annual basis, but OUP reserves the right to amend the policy at any time.

7 Scope

This policy is intended for use by those involved in the management, delivery, and consumption of the Oxford Test of English. It sets out the responsibilities of test takers, Approved Test Centre staff, assessors, and OUP staff with any involvement in the test. It includes examples of malpractice by test takers and Approved Test Centre staff to illustrate how the policy can be implemented.

8 OUP ELT approach to test security

The OUP ELT approach to test security aims to reduce the opportunities for malpractice, and to identify, mitigate and rectify any cases of malpractice through the following five steps.

8.1 Deterrence

Deterrence consists of psychological barriers to malpractice, such as publicizing sanctions and penalties which can be applied against those who have committed malpractice, or posters in test rooms showing what materials are not allowed during the test.

8.2 Prevention

Prevention involves physical barriers to malpractice, such as the mandatory space between workstations to prevent copying, or the use of a secure browser to prevent access to the Internet during a test.

8.3 Detection

Detection is the identification of suspected malpractice, for example by an invigilator raising a concern, or by OUP running statistical analysis of response data to identify suspicious behaviour.

8.4 Investigation

Investigation involves the gathering of facts to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to respond to a suspected malpractice allegation.

8.5 Response

Where there is sufficient substantive evidence of malpractice to justify a response, OUP may impose sanctions on individuals or on Approved Test Centres. Sanctions include withdrawal of test taker results, suspension of Approved Test Centre staff, and withdrawal of Approved Test Centre status. See section 17 for an illustrative list of sanctions and penalties.

9 Reporting suspected malpractice

The Suspected Malpractice Notification Form, available from oxfordtestofenglish.com, can be used by anyone to report suspected malpractice.

9.1 Approved Test Centre staff

If a centre representative (i.e. a Test Centre manager, invigilator, or IT representative) witnesses or suspects malpractice, they must report this to OUP immediately (i.e. on the same day as the malpractice is witnessed or learned about). Failure to report malpractice is itself malpractice (see Section 5.1.1).

When reporting suspected malpractice, photographs should never be taken of test content.

Where malpractice is suspected during a test session, the invigilator must report this in the end-of-test-session report.

Information on suspected malpractice should include:

- the names of any individuals suspected of malpractice
- details of the suspected malpractice
- what the invigilator did in response to the suspected malpractice

In other circumstances, the Suspected Malpractice Notification Form should be used.

9.2 Test takers

Test takers suspecting malpractice should tell the invigilator if this happens during a test session. If the malpractice involves the invigilator or Approved Test Centre staff, the test taker should complete the Suspected Malpractice Notification Form.

9.3 Assessors

Assessors suspecting malpractice while marking the test should use the Escalation process in the marking application. In other circumstances, the Suspected Malpractice Notification Form should be used.

9.4 Approved Test Centre inspectors

Approved Test Centre inspectors should include any suspected malpractice in the

Approved Test Centre Inspections form or use the Suspected Malpractice Notification Form if greater sensitivity is required.

9.5 OUP staff

OUP staff should use the Suspected Malpractice Notification Form.

9.6 Members of the public

Members of the public should use the Suspected Malpractice Notification Form.

10 Investigating malpractice

Malpractice investigations are carried out by OUP. Test Centre staff are expected to co-operate fully with OUP malpractice investigations, and to provide any information required within five working days of requests for information being made.

10.1 The investigation process

The investigation process follows these six steps. Details are given below.

1 The allegation
2 Decision to investigate
3 Communication with stakeholders
4 The investigation
5 The report
6 The decision

11 The allegation

There are a number of triggers which may initiate a malpractice investigation. OUP will review these triggers and determine whether there is sufficient evidence to investigate further. Triggers include, but are not restricted to:

11.1 Suspected Malpractice Notification Form

A Suspected Malpractice Notification Form can be completed by any concerned individual, including Approved Test Centre staff, test takers, teachers, OUP Staff Assessors, and members of the public.

11.2 A complaint

If, while dealing with a complaint, malpractice is suspected, the OUP Suspected Malpractice Investigation Team will be notified. The Oxford Test of English complaints policy is available at oxfordtestofenglish.com.

11.3 Test Session Report

Invigilators are required to complete a Test Session Report for each test session. Any suspected malpractice should be detailed in the report. The reports are monitored by OUP.

11.4 OUP statistical analysis

OUP runs statistical analysis on data generated by test sessions, the results of which may trigger a malpractice investigation. This does not include personal data.

11.5 OUP Web monitoring

OUP monitors the web for potential breaches of test security, which may result in a malpractice investigation.

12 Decision to investigate

When there is a case of suspected malpractice, the Suspected Malpractice Investigation Team will review the available evidence and determine whether to investigate the allegation. This may involve preliminary review of any data available, including but not limited to statistical analysis, test taker response files, and assessor escalation comments.
Where allegations of malpractice are sufficiently serious, preliminary sanctions and penalties (see Section 17) may be imposed at this stage and reviewed upon completion of the investigation.

13 Communication with stakeholders

If OUP decide to investigate the allegation, OUP will inform the relevant stakeholders (for example, test takers, or Approved Test Centre staff), where appropriate, in writing. They will be informed of:

- the allegation
- evidence which supports the allegation
- possible consequences of the allegation

OUP shall make best efforts to maintain the anonymity of those reporting suspected malpractice. Those reporting malpractice who wish to remain anonymous should be aware that OUP may need to disclose their details to others to comply with legal requirements.

14 The investigation

Evidence is gathered by the Suspected Malpractice Investigation Team. To avoid conflict of interest, the team members are drawn from OUP staff working on the Oxford Test of English. Those conducting the investigation must have no personal interest in the outcome of the investigation.

OUP will endeavour to complete the investigation with minimal inconvenience and in the shortest possible time. However, for serious cases of suspected malpractice which may affect future test sessions, OUP reserves the right to take action such as suspending Approved Test Centres without notice.

The full facts and circumstances of any alleged malpractice will be established as far as possible. It should not be assumed that because an allegation has been made, it is true.

Where the investigation uncovers prior knowledge of the content of the test, the investigation team must endeavour to identify whether this prior knowledge may have potentially advantaged other test takers, whether at the same Approved Test Centre or elsewhere.

15 The report

15.1 Draft report

The Suspected Malpractice Investigation Team produces a draft Suspected Malpractice Investigation Report using the proforma in Appendix 2. The report provides details of the suspected malpractice and the intended sanctions or penalties. Where appropriate, the report may also include:

1 details of any interim sanctions or penalties taken any
2 mitigating circumstances
3 records of Approved Test Centre staff training test session
4 seating plan(s)

The individual or Test Centre must be provided a copy of the report and given an opportunity to consider the evidence and provide a response.

15.2 Final report

The final report will incorporate any statements by those subject to the investigation. The report will recommend appropriate sanctions and penalties.

16 The decision

The report will be presented to the SMRB to determine whether there is sufficient information to make a decision or whether further investigation is required.

If the SMRB determines that there is sufficient evidence, it must then establish that the procedures outlined in the document have been followed by the Suspected Malpractice Investigation Team.

The SMRB then determines whether malpractice as defined in Section 5 of this policy has occurred, and who is responsible. If it is determined that malpractice has not taken place, any preliminary sanctions and penalties should be lifted immediately.

If it is determined that malpractice has taken place, or that there is very strong evidence but not proof that malpractice has taken place, the SMRB then decides on appropriate sanctions and penalties. Sanctions and penalties should be proportionate, in line with historic applications of sanctions and penalties, and in line with the examples provided in this document. Where there is an established, clearly evidenced, repeated pattern of behaviour this may be taken into consideration when determining whether a sanction should be applied.

Where malpractice may be criminal in nature, OUP reserves the right to report this malpractice to the relevant law enforcement agencies. This includes the provision of details of test takers who are suspected of illegal activity.

17 Sanctions and penalties

Any combination of the sanctions and penalties outlined below may be imposed. For example, a Test Centre staff member may be issued with a written warning and suspended from invigilating until they have completed their retraining. Sanctions and penalties will be imposed proportionately to the scope and impact of the malpractice and are separate from any disciplinary actions carried out by Approved Test Centres. This list is not exhaustive. See Appendix 1 for illustrative case studies.

17.1 Approved Test Centre malpractice

17.1.1 A written warning to the individual Test Centre staff member The member of staff is issued with a warning that any further malpractice will result in permanent suspension from any activity in relation to the administration of the Oxford Test of English. The Test Centre is informed. If a member of staff who is subject to sanctions moves to another centre in which the OTE is administered, OUP reserves the right to inform the centre of the nature of, and the reason for, the sanction.

17.1.2 A written warning to the Test Centre

The Approved Test Centre Manager or an appropriate member of staff is issued with a warning that any further malpractice will result in the withdrawal of Approved Test Centre status.

17.1.3 Training

The member of Approved Test Centre staff (such as an invigilator) is required to undergo retraining for the role in which malpractice occurred.

17.1.4 Suspension of an individual Approved Test Centre Manager, Invigilator, or IT representative

The member of staff is suspended from any involvement in the administration of the Oxford Test of English. This suspension may be for a specified period, or until any further training is completed satisfactorily. If a member of staff who is subject to sanctions moves to another center in which the OTE is administered, OUP reserves the right to inform the center of the nature of, and the reason for, the sanction.

17.1.5 Suspension of Approved Test Centre status

The Test Centre's approved status is suspended for a specified period of time or until a test centre Inspection is completed satisfactorily. This means that the Test Centre will not be able to advertise, sell or administer the Oxford Test of English until the suspension has ended.

17.1.6 Approved Test Centre Inspection

OUP may carry out an Inspection of the Approved Test Centre.

17.1.7 Debarral of an Approved Test Centre Manager, Invigilator, or IT representative

The Test Centre member of staff may be permanently removed from involvement in the administration of the Oxford Test of English. If a member of staff who is subject to sanctions moves to another center in which the OTE is administered, OUP reserves the right to inform the center of the nature of, and the reason for, the sanction.

17.1.8 Permanent withdrawal of Approved Test Centre status

The Approved Test Centre status is permanently withdrawn. This means that the Test Centre can no longer advertise, sell or administer the Oxford Test of English and future applications to do so will not be accepted.

17.1.9 Replacement tests

Where a test taker's results are affected or withdrawn due to malpractice by Test Centre staff, the Test Centre may be required to provide replacement test sessions at the Test Centre's expense or refund for the test taker.

17.1.10 A written warning to the Test Taker

The Test Taker is issued with a warning that any further malpractice will result in further sanctions, potentially including Debarral.

17.2 Test taker malpractice

17.2.1 Withdrawal of results and a free retake

Where malpractice is strongly suspected but cannot be proved, the test taker's results will be withdrawn, and a retake of the test will be offered free of charge. Where appropriate, the retake will be offered at the same Approved Test Centre that the test was originally taken at.

17.2.2 Withdrawal of results

Where malpractice is proved, results for the relevant modules will be withdrawn.

17.2.3 Informing test score users of results annulment

Where malpractice is proved, test score users (such as university admissions and employers who the test taker has shared their results with) may be informed that the results have been withdrawn due to malpractice.

17.2.4 Suspension

The test taker may be suspended from taking further tests for a limited period, for example, while malpractice is being investigated.

17.2.5 Debarral

Where malpractice is proved, the test taker may be permanently barred from taking the test, and any variations of the test.

17.3 Communicating outcomes

OUP will communicate outcomes of investigations in writing.

18 Useful documents

Test taker terms and conditions

Test regulations

Approved Test Centre Handbook

Suspected Malpractice Notification Form

19 References

ALTE (2020) *ALTE Principles of Good Practice*.

ALTE (2024) *Minimum Standards for establishing quality profiles in ALTE examinations*.

International Test Commission (2014) *International Guidelines on the Security of Tests, Examinations, and Other Assessments*.

Joint Council for Qualifications (2025) Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures

20 Appendix 1 – Examples of malpractice

The following case studies of suspected malpractice are for illustrative purposes only. They describe examples of malpractice and the potential outcomes in response to the malpractice.

20.1 Test taker registration malpractice

A test taker registers for the test with only their first name. The invigilator fails to check that the full name on the test taker's ID matches the name on the computer screen and starts the test. The test taker completes the test. OUP identifies the issue through its data analysis.

This is clearly in breach of the policy set out in the Approved Test Centre Handbook which states that once test takers have signed in, the invigilator must check that 1) each test taker's appearance matches the photograph on their ID; 2) the name and ID number on each test taker's ID matches the name and ID number that appear on the top right of the test taker's computer screen.

Potential outcomes:

- The invigilator is issued with a written warning. The invigilator is also suspended until they have successfully repeated invigilator training.
- The test taker's results are withdrawn.
- The Approved Test Centre is required to provide a replacement test session for the test takers affected, at the Approved Test Centre's expense.

20.2 Test taker uses a falsified certificate

A university receives a certificate from a test taker and contacts OUP to verify the certificate. The results on the certificate do not match OUP's records.

This is clearly in breach of the policy set out in the test taker Terms and conditions which state that test takers will not try to improve their own or another test taker's score by any fraudulent means.

Potential outcomes:

- The test taker's results are withdrawn
- The test taker is debarred from taking any test or module in the Oxford Test of English suite of tests
- The university is alerted to the falsified certificate and the sanctions (results withdrawal and debarring) of the test taker

20.3 Invigilator provides unsanctioned assistance to a test taker

While doing the Speaking module, a test taker could not remember a word in English and asked the invigilator for help. The invigilator told the word to the test taker. The discussion between the invigilator and test taker was captured on the audio recording and the assessor marking the response escalated the behaviour as suspicious. An investigation showed that the invigilator had assisted the test taker.

This is clearly in breach of the policy set out in the Approved Test Centre Handbook which states that invigilators must not assist test takers in

any way to gain or

provide them with an unfair advantage. It is determined that the assistance gave the test taker an unfair advantage.

Potential outcomes:

- The invigilator is issued with a written warning. The invigilator is also suspended until they have successfully repeated invigilator training.
- The test taker's results are withdrawn.
- The Approved Test Centre provides the test taker with a resit at the Approved Test Centre's expense.

20.4 Approved Test Centre Manager takes a photograph during a test session

During a test session, an Approved Test Centre manager took photographs of test takers taking a test during a test session. The photographs were used to promote the test on the Test Centre's website. The malpractice was discovered by OUP's web monitoring.

This is clearly in breach of the policy set out in the Approved Test Centre Handbook which states that invigilators must ensure that no photographs are taken by any person in the test room before, during or after a test session.

Potential outcomes:

- The Approved Test Centre is issued with a written warning.
- The Approved Test Centre is suspended from running test sessions until it has been re- inspected.

20.5 Invigilator fails to report malpractice

During a test session, a test taker was found to have access to a mobile phone. The invigilator confiscated the phone and returned it to the test taker at the end of the test session. The invigilator failed to report the disruption in the Test Session Report. A number of test takers made complaints to OUP.

This is a breach of the policy set out in the Approved Test Centre Handbook which states that invigilators must ensure that any suspected malpractice is reported in the Test Session Report.

Potential outcomes:

- The invigilator is issued with a written warning. The invigilator is also suspended until they have successfully repeated invigilator training.
- The Approved Test Centre is issued with a written warning.
- The Approved Test Centre is suspended from running test sessions until it has been re- inspected.

20.6 A test taker breaks the retake policy

During regular data analysis, OUP identifies a test taker who has retaken the test more times than allowed in the Test Regulations.

This is a clear breach of the Test Regulations which specify the number of times a test taker can re-take within a given period of time. It is both the responsibility of the test taker and the test centre to ensure that that the allowed number of retakes is not exceeded.

Potential outcomes:

- The test taker's results are withdrawn for the test taken that breached the Test Regulations.
- The test taker is issued with a written warning.
- The Approved Test Centre is issued with a written warning

21 Appendix 2 – Suspected Malpractice Investigation Report

The suspected malpractice investigation report must include the following details:

1. Date of report
2. Author of report
3. Suspected Malpractice Investigation Team members
4. Details of the suspected malpractice
5. Statement by the person(s) under investigation
6. Recommended sanctions and penalties, including a rationale