



Cambridge English Malpractice Procedure

Cambridge English (and in the case of *IELTS*, together with British Council and IDP Education Ltd) has a responsibility to candidates, test centres and other stakeholders to ensure the integrity of our examinations by putting in place robust measures to identify and deal with instances of candidate or test centre malpractice.

The Cambridge Assessment English Malpractice Procedure deals with cases of suspected irregular conduct.

Irregular conduct is any action which gives or aims to give unfair advantage to a candidate or causes disadvantage to other candidates. The Notice to Candidates, which is displayed outside all examination rooms, warns candidates of the consequences of such actions. In the case of *IELTS*, candidates are warned of the consequences of such actions in the Application Form (Notice to Candidates and Declaration).

Cambridge English, British Council and IDP Education Ltd have rigorous procedures in place to detect instances of malpractice.

Examples of malpractice include:

- obtaining unauthorised access to examination material
- using or trying to use unauthorised material, e.g. notes, study guides, mobile phones
- copying/collusion or attempted copying/collusion
- disruptive behaviour or not following the instructions of an invigilator, supervisor or Centre Exams Manager/*IELTS* Test Administrator, e.g. use of mobile phones or other electronic devices
- impersonation (pretending to be someone else)
- altering any results document, including certificates/*IELTS* Test Report Forms
- any other form of cheating or gaining of an unfair advantage.

Cases of suspected malpractice may be reported, for example:

- by the centre, e.g. a report from an invigilator
- by an examiner, e.g. unusual incorrect answers, shared by candidates who were sitting next to each other
- via an application for Special Consideration
- by statistical analysis of candidates' answer sheets (see below).

Once reported, potential malpractice cases follow a process of investigation by Cambridge English staff, assisted as necessary by the Malpractice Panel, which may lead to results being permanently withheld. In the case of *IELTS*, potential malpractice cases are also investigated by the Investigation Teams of British Council, IDP Education Ltd, and *IELTS* USA.



Post-test statistical analysis

In line with best practice, we investigate potential malpractice by carrying out a range of statistical analyses on individual candidate results, pairs and groups of candidates in test venues and the overall results of all the candidates from one test administration.

These analyses may include, but are not limited to:

- comparing the similarity of response patterns, or marks, between two or more candidates
- comparing the performance of a candidate on one test paper to their performance on the other papers
- comparing the performance of a candidate on one test date to their performance on a previous test date
- assessing the likelihood of certain responses and scores given the overall ability of a candidate
- analysing key stroke activity (in a computer-based test).

In each case the analysis assesses the likelihood of any given pattern of results or scores being found by chance, given the typical pattern observed in the rest of the test population (based on historical candidate data). In other words we identify instances where the candidates' results are substantially different from those observed in the overall population.

Any cases which are identified as being unusual may then be further scrutinised by an external Malpractice Panel. All available evidence is checked before a decision is made on whether to withhold results.

If we have reasonable grounds to suspect that a result is not a reliable indicator of a candidate's ability, then we believe it is in the interests of all candidates that we withhold it.

Malpractice Panel meeting

Cambridge English has a dedicated Malpractice Panel which looks at cases, taking into account all relevant information, e.g. statements from candidates. After carefully considering the case, the Panel may be asked to help us to decide whether the candidate's result should be released or permanently withheld. The centre is then asked to inform the candidate.

If it is decided that a candidate's results can be released, the original results will be issued, unchanged. If it is decided that the results should be permanently withheld, the candidate will not receive a result. In the case of *IELTS*, candidates found to have engaged in malpractice may also be banned from taking the test in future.

This procedure is designed to ensure that all decisions are consistent, fair and based on the fullest information available. We aim to complete the investigation of suspected



malpractice cases within eight weeks of the test date. In the case of *IELTS*, some investigations may take longer to complete.

There is an appeals procedure for candidates who wish to appeal against a decision to permanently withhold their result. Information about the appeals procedure can be found on the [enquiries and appeals page](#).

Further information

For further information or advice please [contact the Cambridge English Helpdesk team](#).