

Vanguard Learning Trust



As a group of local primary and secondary schools, Vanguard Learning Trust's mission is to serve its local community by providing outstanding, inclusive education. We have a collective purpose and responsibility to provide effective teaching, through an ambitious curriculum based on equality of opportunity and entitlement that allows our students to shine both in and out of the classroom. Each school in the Trust has its own ethos, which also complements the Trust's vision and values, and the common aspiration that all students can thrive and develop into responsible young adults ready to embrace their future.

Examinations policy

Spring 2026

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Section 1. Overview

1.1 Aims of policy

The Vanguard Learning Trust is committed to ensuring that the examination management and administration process is run effectively and efficiently and in compliance with the published Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations and awarding body requirements. This examination policy seeks to ensure that:

- all aspects of the examination processes are documented and other relevant examination-related policies, procedures and plans are signposted;
- staff are well informed and supported;
- all staff involved in the examination process clearly understand their roles and responsibilities;
- all exams and assessments are conducted according to JCQ and awarding body regulations, guidance and instructions, thus maintaining the integrity and security of the exam/assessment system at all times; and
- examination candidates understand the examination process and what is expected of them.

This policy will be published on each school's website to be accessible to all relevant centre staff, candidates and parents/carers.

1.2 Legislation on the sharing of information

Under the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and the Data Protection Act 2018, children and young adults can assume control over their personal information and restrict access to it from the age of 13. This suggests that candidate consent should be sought to share results or other exams-related information with a third party. However other legislation and guidance may need to be taken into account regarding sharing information with parents/carers, for example:

- Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility ([click here](#))
- School reports on pupil performance ([click here](#))
- The trust will ensure students have access to JCQ's guidance 'Information about you and how we use it' ([click here](#)) at the start of each course

1.3 Monitoring the impact of this policy

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure that the centre's procedures are accurately reflected and that all examinations and assessments are conducted in accordance with current JCQ and awarding body regulations, instructions and guidance.

Section 2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Head of centre

The head of centre of each Trust school is the individual who is accountable to the awarding bodies for ensuring that the centre is compliant with the published JCQ regulations and awarding body requirements, in order to ensure the security and integrity of the examinations/assessments.

2.2 Examinations officer

The examinations officer is the person appointed by the head of centre to act on behalf of, and be the main point of contact for, the centre in matters relating to the general administration of awarding body examinations and assessments.

2.3 Member of the school's senior leadership team (SLT) in charge of exams

The SLT member in charge of exams is the person appointed by the head of centre to oversee the implementation of the examinations policy and procedures, and to be the main point of contact for the examinations officer.

2.4 Deputy headteacher

In the event that the head of centre and/or the member of SLT in charge of examinations is absent for an extended period of time the deputy headteacher of the school will take charge of the examination process.

2.5 Special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo)

The SENCo is the member of staff with responsibility for approving access arrangements and reasonable adjustments for candidates such as those with evidence-based special educational needs and/or medical conditions that may have an impact on their ability to complete the examination to the best of their ability. Appropriate support and adjustments are arranged by the SENCo. Such adjustments will only be considered for students for whom appropriate evidence has been provided.

2.6 Teaching staff

Teaching staff are expected to undertake key tasks, as detailed in this policy, within the exams process and meet internal deadlines set by the examinations officer, SLT member in charge of exams and SENCo. They have a responsibility to stay up-to-date with awarding body subject and teacher-specific information to ensure effective delivery of qualifications. They are expected to attend relevant awarding body training and update events.

2.7 Exam invigilators

Exam invigilators are expected to:

- provide the centre with an up-to-date certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service;
- attend training, update briefing and review sessions as required;
- follow the procedures and systems prescribed by the centre to protect the integrity of all examinations;
- be vigilant and alert at all times throughout an examination;
- provide information as requested on their availability to invigilate; and
- sign a confidentiality and security agreement and confirm whether they have any current maladministration/malpractice sanctions applied to them (see **Section 6** for definitions).

2.8 Reception staff

Reception staff are expected to support the examinations officer in the receipt and dispatch of confidential exam materials and follow the requirements for maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the exam materials.

2.9 Site staff

Site staff are expected to support the examinations officer in relevant matters relating to exam rooms and resources. They are also responsible for supporting the examinations officer in the receipt and dispatch of confidential exam materials and follow the requirements for maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the exam materials.

Section 3. Certificates

3.1 Collections of certificates

Certificates are collected and signed for by the candidate or an authorised person. Candidates may arrange for certificates to be collected on their behalf by providing the examinations officer with written or email permission/authorisation; authorised persons must provide ID evidence on collection of certificates.

3.2 Retention of certificates

Unclaimed or uncollected certificates are kept for a minimum of ten years. After this period they are securely destroyed.

Section 4. Post-results services

Candidates are required to pay the applicable fee to the school in advance for any enquiry about examination results or requests for remarks. The fee will be determined by the awarding body's charges for post-results services.

Section 5. External candidates

The Trust will facilitate the examinations for external candidates at the discretion of the school's head of centre.

Section 6. Malpractice and maladministration

6.1 Definitions

'Malpractice' and 'maladministration' are related concepts, the common theme of which is that they involve a failure to follow the rules of an examination or assessment. This policy and procedure uses the word 'malpractice' to cover both 'malpractice' and 'maladministration' and it means any act, default or practice which is:

- a breach of the regulations;
- a breach of awarding body requirements regarding how a qualification should be delivered; and/or
- a failure to follow established procedures in relation to a qualification

which:

- gives rise to prejudice to candidates;
- compromises public confidence in qualifications;
- 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 any awarding body or centre or any officer, employee or agent of any awarding body or centre.

For the purposes of this document, suspected malpractice means all alleged or suspected incidents of malpractice.

6.2 Candidate malpractice

'Candidate malpractice' means malpractice by a candidate in connection with any examination or assessment, including the preparation and authentication of any controlled assessments, coursework or non-examination assessments, the presentation of any practical work, the compilation of portfolios of assessment evidence and the writing of any examination paper.

6.3 Centre staff malpractice

'Centre staff malpractice' means malpractice committed by:

- a member of staff, contractor (whether employed under a contract of employment or a contract for services) or a volunteer at a centre; or
- an individual appointed in another capacity by a centre such as an invigilator, a Communication Professional, a Language Modifier, a practical assistant, a prompter, a reader or a scribe.

6.4 General principles to reduce the risk of malpractice

In accordance with the regulations, the Trust will:

- take all reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any malpractice (which includes maladministration) before, during and after examinations have taken place;
- inform the awarding body immediately of any alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice or maladministration, involving a candidate or a member of staff, by completing the appropriate documentation; and

- as required by an awarding body, gather evidence of any instances of alleged or suspected malpractice (which includes maladministration) in accordance with the JCQ publication ‘Suspected malpractice: Policies and procedures’ (click [here](#)) and provide such information and advice as the awarding body may reasonably require.

6.5 Preventing malpractice

To help prevent malpractice, the Trust has in place robust processes to prevent and identify malpractice, as outlined in section 3 of the JCQ publication ‘Suspected malpractice: Policies and procedures’. This includes ensuring that all staff involved in the delivery of assessments and examinations understand the requirements for conducting these as specified in the following JCQ documents and any further awarding body guidance:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres
- Instructions for conducting examinations (ICE)
- Instructions for conducting coursework
- Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments
- Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments
- A guide to the special consideration process
- Plagiarism in assessments
- AI use in assessments: Protecting the integrity of qualifications
- A guide to the awarding bodies’ appeals processes

6.6 Reporting suspected malpractice to the awarding body

Where malpractice is suspected, settings will engage with the following procedure:

- The head of centre will notify the appropriate awarding body immediately of all alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice, using the appropriate forms, and will conduct any investigation and gathering of information in accordance with the requirements of the JCQ publication ‘Suspected malpractice: Policies and procedures’.
- The head of centre will ensure that where a candidate who is a child/vulnerable adult is the subject of a malpractice investigation, the candidate’s parent/carer/appropriate adult is kept informed of the progress of the investigation.
- Form JCQ/M1 will be used to notify an awarding body of an incident of candidate malpractice. Form JCQ/M2 will be used to notify an awarding body of an incident of suspected staff malpractice/maladministration.
- Malpractice by a candidate discovered in a controlled assessment, coursework or non-examination assessment component prior to the candidate signing the declaration of authentication need not be reported to the awarding body but will be dealt with in accordance with the centre’s internal procedures. The only exception to this is where the awarding body’s confidential assessment material has potentially been breached. The breach will be reported to the awarding body immediately.
- If, in the view of the investigator, there is sufficient evidence to implicate an individual in malpractice, that individual (a candidate or a member of staff) will be informed of the rights of accused individuals.
- Once the information gathering has concluded, the head of centre (or other appointed information-gatherer) will submit a written report summarising the information obtained and actions taken to the relevant awarding body, accompanied by the information obtained during the course of their enquiries.
- Form JCQ/M1 will be used when reporting candidate cases; for centre staff, form JCQ/M3 will be used.
- The awarding body will decide on the basis of the report, and any supporting documentation, whether there is evidence of malpractice and if any further investigation is required. The head of centre will be informed accordingly.

6.7 Communicating malpractice decisions

Once a decision has been made as to whether or not malpractice has occurred, it will be communicated in writing to the head of centre as soon as possible. The head of centre, or an appointed person, will communicate the decision to the individuals concerned and pass on details of any sanctions and action in cases where this is indicated. The head of centre will also inform the individuals if they have the right to appeal.

6.8 Whistleblowing

6.8.1 Definition

A whistleblower is defined as a person who reports an actual or potential wrongdoing and is protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, providing they are acting in the public interest.

6.8.2 Whistleblowing procedure

If an individual does not feel safe raising the issue/reporting malpractice within the centre, or they have done so and are concerned that no action has been taken, that individual could consider making their disclosure to a malpractice expert at the awarding body for the qualification where malpractice is suspected. For members of centre staff, it is likely that the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) offers legal protection from being dismissed or penalised for raising certain serious concerns (known as 'blowing the whistle'). Whistleblowing rights under PIDA are day one rights. This means that the worker does not need the same two years' service that is needed for other employment rights. In order to investigate concerns effectively, the awarding body should be provided with as much information as possible/is relevant, which may include:

- the qualifications and subjects involved;
- the centre involved;
- the names of staff/candidates involved;
- the regulations breached/specific nature of suspected malpractice;
- when and where the suspected malpractice occurred;
- whether multiple examination series are affected;
- if the issue has been reported to the centre and what the outcome was; and/or
- how the issue became apparent.

Members of the public are not protected by PIDA but the awarding body will make every effort to protect their identity if that is what they wish, unless the awarding body is legally obliged to release it. Alternatively, a worker could consider making a disclosure to Ofqual as a prescribed body for whistleblowing to raise a concern about wrongdoing, risk or malpractice.

6.8.3 Anonymity

In some circumstances, the whistleblower might find it difficult to raise concerns with the nominated member of the senior leadership team. If a concern is raised anonymously, the issue may not be able to be taken further if insufficient information has been provided. In such instances, and if appropriate, the allegation may be disclosed to a union representative, who could then be required to report the concern without disclosing its source. Alternatively, whistleblowers or others with concerns about potential malpractice can report the matter directly to Ofqual, who is identified as a 'prescribed body'. Awarding organisations are not prescribed bodies under whistleblowing legislation; however, awarding organisation investigation teams do give those reporting concerns the opportunity for anonymity. A whistleblower can give his/her name, but may also request confidentiality; the person receiving the information should make every effort to protect the identity of the whistleblower.

6.9 Appeals against decisions made in cases of malpractice

In the event of an appeal against decisions made in cases of malpractice, the Trust will provide the individual with information on the process and timeframe for submitting an appeal, where relevant and refer to further information and follow the process provided in the JCQ publication 'A guide to the awarding bodies' appeals processes'.

Section 7. Use of artificial intelligence (AI) in examinations, coursework and assessments

7.1 Overview

The Vanguard Learning Trust recognises that Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (including, but not limited to, text generation, paraphrasing, image generation and automated problem-solving tools) are increasingly accessible to students.

7.2 Requirements

The use of AI in examinations, coursework, controlled assessments and non-examination assessments must comply fully with JCQ regulations and awarding body requirements:

- Candidates must not use AI tools in any assessment unless their use is explicitly permitted by the awarding body for that qualification and component.
- Where AI use is permitted, candidates must follow the awarding body's instructions regarding acknowledgement, referencing and declaration of AI-assisted content.
- Submitting work generated wholly or partly by AI as a candidate's own, without permission or appropriate acknowledgement, constitutes malpractice.
- The use of AI to plan, draft, edit, paraphrase or complete assessment work where this is not explicitly allowed will be treated as plagiarism and/or candidate malpractice.

For examinations conducted under formal exam conditions, the possession or use of any AI-enabled device or application is prohibited unless specifically authorised as part of an approved access arrangement. Staff will take reasonable steps to:

- educate candidates about acceptable and unacceptable use of AI in assessments;
- design and authenticate assessments in line with awarding body guidance; and
- identify and investigate suspected misuse of AI.

7.3 Suspected misuse of AI

Any suspected misuse of AI will be investigated and reported in accordance with the Trust's malpractice procedures and the JCQ publication 'Suspected malpractice: Policies and procedures'. Sanctions will be applied in line with awarding body decisions.

Version history

First issue/revision date	Approved by	Summary of changes if not first issue
Spring 2026	BoT	New policy