

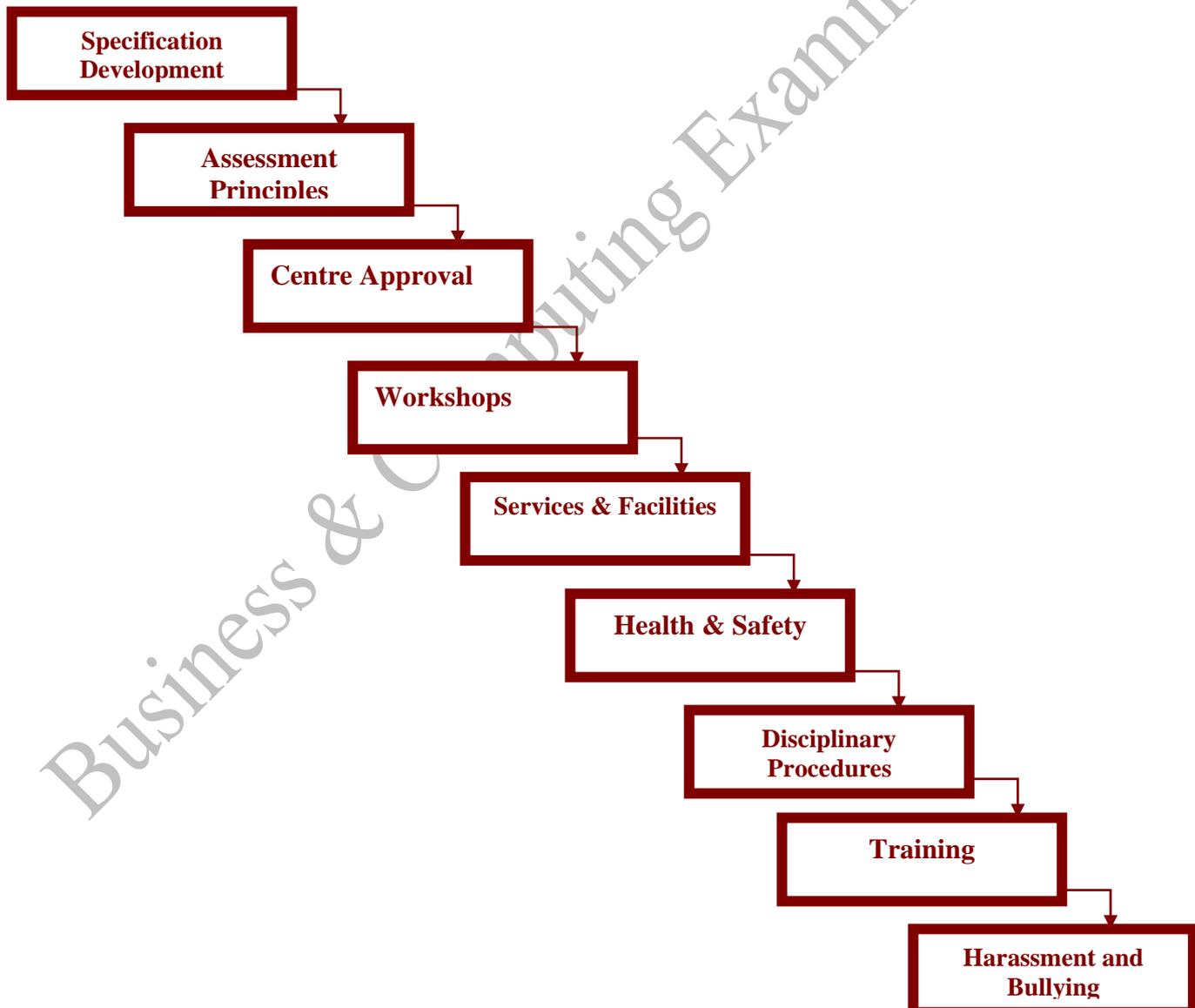


Business & Computing Examinations (BCE) LONDON (UK)

Ethical Policy

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Ethical Practice Framework



BCE is committed to a policy of ethical conduct in accordance with our mission. It is our aim that potential and actual learners in Centres are treated fairly on the basis of merit regardless of age, disability, family responsibilities, gender, HIV status, marital status, mental health problems, nationality, race, religious or political views or affiliations, sexual orientation or socio-economic background. BCE follows an ethical practice to ensure that this policy is fully effective:

Good Ethical Practices

1. Specification Development
2. Assessment Principles
3. Centre Approval
4. Workshops
5. Services and Facilities
6. Health and Safety
7. Disciplinary Procedures
8. Training
9. Harassment and Bullying

1. Specification Development

- 1.1 BCE recognises the importance of the development of an individual through the educational process and the role of the specification in ensuring that this development is fulfilled.
- 1.2 BCE is therefore committed to the promotion of ethical conduct with respect to unit content, approaches to teaching and learning, assessment methods and the structure and timetabling of qualifications of study. Further, it will aim to ensure that documents such as qualification submissions, teaching materials and examination papers reflect the principles of ethical conduct.
- 1.3 BCE will aim to provide qualifications which are of relevance and interest to persons of both sexes and from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds and which are as accessible as possible to people with disabilities, as far as resources permit.
- 1.4 BCE will encourage perspectives which reflect the cultural diversity of our society and which are neither gender dominated nor ethnocentric.
- 1.5 BCE will encourage and appraise from an ethical point of view through the process of validation and monitoring the use of a range of teaching approaches at centres as well as assessment methods and will be sensitive to the special needs of under-represented groups in teaching and learning situations.

[For more information, see BCE Qualification Development & Assessment Managements section on BCE website]

2. **Assessment Principles**

- 2.1 BCE's objective is to provide a fair method of ethical conduct in assessing all of its learners.
- 2.2 Special considerations will be made available to learners with known disabilities, to compensate for the restrictions imposed by the disability without affecting the validity of examinations and assessments. [see Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy]
- 2.3 When an exam setter/reviser/scrutiniser/examiner/verifier is appointed to set, scrutinise, mark or verify examinations, BCE will draw his or her attention to BCE's Policy on Ethical Conduct. BCE expect all Assessment Panel to act in accordance with this policy.

As an organisation dedicated to the improvement of measurement and evaluation practice in assessment, BCE has adopted this Code of Conduct to promote professionally responsible practice in educational measurement, which arises from the professional standards of the fields and general ethical principles.

The purpose of the policy is to guide the conduct of Business & Computing Examinations (BCE) members who are involved in any tinge of assessment activity.

Ethical conduct enumerates professional responsibilities in eight major areas of assessment activity. Specifically, the principles present the professional obligations of those who:

- 2.3.1 Develop specifications and assessments
- 2.3.2 Market and promote qualifications
- 2.3.3 Select qualifications and assessments
- 2.3.4 Administer assessments
- 2.3.5 Mark assessments
- 2.3.6 Interpret, use, and communicate assessment results
- 2.3.7 Educate others about qualifications and assessments
- 2.3.8 Evaluate qualifications and conduct research on assessments

General Obligations

The professional duties promulgated in the above eight major areas of assessment activity are based on expectations that BCE members involved in educational assessment will:

- i. protect the health and safety of all learners;
- ii. be knowledgeable about, and behave in compliance with, government laws relevant to the conduct of professional activities
- iii. maintain and improve their professional competence in examination assessment;
- iv. provide assessment services only in areas of their competence and experience, affording full disclosure of their professional qualifications;
- v. promote the understanding of sound assessment practices in professional education;

- vi. adhere to the highest standards of conduct and promote professionally responsible conduct within centres and agencies that provide educational services and
- vii. perform all professional responsibilities with honesty, integrity, due care and fairness.

2.3.1 **Obligations of those who Develop Specifications and Assessment products**

Those who develop specifications and assessment products and services, such as designers, writers and other specialists (exam setters, exam revisers/scrutinisers), have a professional responsibility to strive to produce specifications and assessments that are of highest quality. Persons who develop assessments have a professional obligation to:

- 2.3.1.1 Ensure that assessment products and services are developed to meet applicable professional, technical, and legal standards.
- 2.3.1.2 Develop assessment products and services that are as free as possible from bias due to characteristics irrelevant to the construct being measured, such as gender, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, disability, religion, age, or national origin.
- 2.3.1.3 Plan to accommodate learners with disabilities and other special needs when developing assessments.
- 2.3.1.4 Disclose to appropriate parties any actual or potential conflicts of interest that might influence the developers' judgement or performance.
- 2.3.1.5 Use copyrighted materials in assessment products and services in accordance with the law.
- 2.3.1.6 Make information available to appropriate persons about the steps taken to develop, design and write specifications and assessments, including up to date information used to support the reliability, validity, marking and reporting processes, and other relevant characteristics of the specification or assessment.
- 2.3.1.7 Protect the rights to privacy of those who are assessed as part of the development process.
- 2.3.1.8 Caution everybody involved, in clear and prominent language, against the most likely misinterpretations and misuses of data that might arise out of the development process.
- 2.3.1.9 Avoid false or unsubstantiated claims in specification, assessment preparation or qualification support materials and services about its use and interpretation.
- 2.3.1.10 Correct any substantive inaccuracies in specifications, assessments or their support materials as soon as feasible.
- 2.3.1.11 Develop reports and support materials that promote the understanding of the development process.

2.3.2 **Obligations of those who market and promote qualification products and services**

The marketing of qualification products and services should be based on information that is accurate, complete, and relevant to those considering their use. Persons who market and promote qualification products and services have a professional obligation to:

- 2.3.2.1 Provide accurate information to potential Centres about qualification products and services and their recommended levels and limitations.
- 2.3.2.2 Not knowingly withhold relevant information about qualification products and services that might affect an appropriate selection decision.

- 2.3.2.3 Base all claims about qualification products and services on valid interpretations of publicly available information.
- 2.3.2.4 Allow qualified users equal opportunity to purchase qualification products and services.
- 2.3.2.5 Provide the stated charges for qualification products and services.
- 2.3.2.6 Communicate to potential users, well in advanced, all applicable charges associated with assessment products and services.
- 2.3.2.7 Maintain a current understanding about qualification products and services and their appropriate uses in education and assessment.
- 2.3.2.8 Avoid making claims that qualification products and services have been endorsed by another organisation unless an official endorsement has been obtained.

2.3.3. Obligations of those who select qualification and assessment products and services

Those who select qualification and assessment products and services for use in education settings, or help others do so, have important professional responsibilities to make sure that the assessment are appropriate for their intended use. Persons who select qualification and assessment products and services have a professional obligation to:

- 2.3.3.1 Conduct a thorough review and evaluation of available assessment strategies and instruments that might be valid for the intended uses.
- 2.3.3.2 Recommend and/or select qualification and assessments based on publicly available documented evidence of their technical quality and utility rather than on unsubstantiated claims or statements.
- 2.3.3.3 Disclose any associations or affiliations that they have with others involved with the qualification and assessments under consideration for purchase and refrain from participation of such associations might affect the objectivity of the selection process.
- 2.3.3.4 Inform decision makers and prospective users of the appropriateness of the qualification and assessment for the intended uses, likely consequences of use, protection of examinee rights, relative costs, materials and services needed to conduct or use the qualification and assessment, and known limitations of the assessment, including potential misuses and misinterpretations of assessment information.
- 2.3.3.5 Recommend against the use of any prospective qualification and assessment that is likely to be administered, marked and used in an invalid manner for members of various groups in our society for reasons of race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, language background, socio-economic status, religion, or national origin.
- 2.3.3.6 Comply with all security precautions that may accompany qualification and assessments being reviewed.
- 2.3.3.7 Immediately disclose any attempts by others to exert undue influence on the qualification and assessment selection process.

2.3.4. Obligations of those who administer assessments

Those who prepare learners to take assessments and those who are directly and indirectly involved in the administration of assessments are part of the examination process, have an important role in making sure that the assessments are administered

in a fair and accurate manner. Persons who prepare others for, and those who administer, assessments have a professional obligation to:

- 2.3.4.1 Inform the learners about the assessment prior to its administration, including its purposes, uses, and consequences; how the assessment information will be judged or marked; how the results will be kept on file; who will have access to the results; how the results will be distributed; and examinees' rights before, during and after the assessment.
- 2.3.4.2 Administer only those assessments for which they are authorised by the relevant authority.
- 2.3.4.3 Take appropriate security precautions before, during, and after the administration of the assessment.
- 2.3.4.4 Understand the procedures needed to administer the assessment prior to administration.
- 2.3.4.5 Administer standardised assessments according to prescribed procedures and conditions and notify appropriate persons if any non-standard or delimiting conditions occur.
- 2.3.4.6 Not exclude any eligible learner from the assessment.
- 2.3.4.7 Avoid any conditions in the conduct of the assessment that might invalidate the results.
- 2.3.4.8 Provide for and document all reasonable and allowable accommodations for the administration of the assessment to persons with disabilities or special needs.
- 2.3.4.9 Provide reasonable opportunities for individuals to ask questions about the assessment procedures or directions prior to and at prescribed times during the administration of the assessment.
- 2.3.4.10 Protect the rights to privacy and due process of those who are assessed.
- 2.3.4.11 Avoid actions or conditions that would permit or encourage individuals or groups to receive marks that misrepresent their actual levels of attainment.

2.3.5 **Obligations of those who mark assessments**

The marking of educational assessments should be conducted properly and efficiently so that the results are reported accurately and in a timely manner. Persons who mark and prepare reports of assessments have a professional obligation to:

- 2.3.5.1 Provide complete and accurate information to users about how the assessment is marked, such as the reporting schedule, marking process to be used, rationale for the marking approach, technical characteristics, quality control procedures and reporting formats.
- 2.3.5.2 Ensure the accuracy of the assessment results by conducting reasonable quality control procedures before, during and after marking.
- 2.3.5.3 Minimise the effect on marking of factors irrelevant to the purposes of the assessment.
- 2.3.5.4 Inform learners promptly of any deviation in the planning marking and reporting service or schedule.
- 2.3.5.5 Provide corrected marked results to the learners as quickly as practicable should errors be found that may affect the inferences made on the basis of the marks.
- 2.3.5.6 Protect the confidentiality of information that identifies individuals as prescribed by law.
- 2.3.5.7 Release summary results of the assessment only to those persons entitled to such information.

2.3.5.8 Establish, where feasible, a fair and reasonable process for appeal and re-marking the assessment.

2.3.6 Obligations of those who interpret, and communicate assessment results

The interpretation, use and communication of assessment results should promote valid references and minimise invalid ones. Persons who interpret, use and communicate assessment results have a professional obligation to:

- 2.3.6.1 Conduct these activities in an informed, objective, and fair manner within the context of the assessment's limitations and with an understanding of the potential consequences of use.
- 2.3.6.2 Provide to those who receive assessment results information about the assessment, its purposes, its limitations, and its uses necessary for the proper interpretation of the results.
- 2.3.6.3 Provide to those who receive marked reports an understandable written description of all reported marks, including proper interpretations and likely misinterpretations.
- 2.3.6.4 Communicate to appropriate audiences the results of the assessment in an understandable and timely manner, including proper interpretations and likely misinterpretations.
- 2.3.6.5 Evaluate and communicate the adequacy and appropriateness of any norms or standards used in the interpretation of assessment results.
- 2.3.6.6 Inform parties involved in the assessment process how assessment results may affect them.
- 2.3.6.7 Use multiple sources and type of relevant information about persons or qualifications whenever possible in making educational decisions.
- 2.3.6.8 Avoid making, and actively discourage others from making, inaccurate reports, unsubstantiated claims, inappropriate interpretations, or otherwise false and misleading statements about assessment results.
- 2.3.6.9 Disclose to learners and others whether and how long the results of the assessment will be kept on file, procedures of appeal and re-marking, rights examinees and others have to the assessment information, and how those rights may be exercised.
- 2.3.6.10 Report any apparent misuses of assessment information to those responsible for the assessment process.
- 2.3.6.11 Protect the rights to privacy of individuals and institutions involved in the assessment process.

2.3.7. Obligations of those who educate others about qualifications and assessment

The process of educating others about qualifications and examination assessment, whether as part of higher education, professional development, public policy discussions, or job training, should prepare individuals to understand and engage in sound measurement practice and to become discerning users of exams and results. Persons who educate or inform others about qualifications and assessment have a professional obligation to:

- 2.3.7.1 Remain competent and current in the areas in which they teach and reflect that in their instruction.
- 2.3.7.2 Provide fair and balanced perspectives when teaching about assessment.

- 2.3.7.3 Differentiate clearly between expressions of opinion and substantiated knowledge when educating others about any specific assessment method, product or service.
- 2.3.7.4 Disclose any financial interests that might be perceived to influence the evaluation of a particular qualification and assessment product or service that is the subject of instruction.
- 2.3.7.5 Avoid using or reporting the results of any assessment that is not part of the evaluation of learner performance in a qualification if the use or reporting of results is likely to harm any learner.
- 2.3.7.6 Protect all secure assessments and materials used in the instructional process.
- 2.3.7.7 Model responsible qualifications and assessment practice and help those receiving instruction to learn about their professional responsibilities in educational measurement.
- 2.3.7.8 Provide fair and balanced perspectives on qualification and assessment issues being discussed by policymakers etc.

2.3.8. **Obligations of those who evaluate educational qualifications and conduct research on assessment**

Conducting research on or about assessments or examination programs is a key activity in helping to improve the understanding and use of assessments and qualifications. Persons who engage in the evaluation of educational qualifications or conduct research on assessments have a professional obligation to:

- 2.3.8.1 Conduct evaluation and research activities in an informed, objective and fair manner.
- 2.3.8.2 Disclose any associations that they have with authors, exam publishers, or others involved with the assessment and refrain from participation if such associations might affect the objectivity of the research or evaluation.
- 2.3.8.3 Preserve the security of all assessments throughout the research process as appropriate.
- 2.3.8.4 Take appropriate steps to minimise potential sources of invalidity in the research and disclose known factors that may bias the results of the study.
- 2.3.8.5 Present the results of research, both intended and unintended, in a fair, complete, and objective manner.
- 2.3.8.6 Attribute completely and appropriately the work and ideas of others.
- 2.3.8.7 Qualify the conclusions of the research within the limitations of the study.
- 2.3.8.8 Use multiple sources of relevant information in conducting evaluation and research activities whenever possible.
- 2.3.8.9 Comply with applicable standards for protecting the rights of participants in an evaluation or research study, including the rights to privacy and informed consent.

3. **Centre Approval**

- 3.1 All centre recruitment literature will use non-discriminatory language and will encourage applications from every corner of the world interested in higher education. Prospective Centres will be given realistic guidance on the qualification structure, duration times, exam fees, and exam timetables. BCE also run frequent training seminars to help Centres.
- 3.2 BCE's aim is to help learners benefit intellectually from our qualifications.

- 3.3 We encourage Centres to carefully assess whether a learner can start at Level 3 or 4 Certificate, Level 5 Diploma or Level 6 Diploma level. However, other evidence relating to the learner's background are also relevant, for example, work experience. Centres should note that reliance on academic qualifications as the only assessment tool and excluding other factors may be discriminatory. [see BCE Exemption Policy]
- 3.4 In assessing academic level, the following particular considerations apply:
- (a) BCE recognises many qualifications as meeting the general entry requirement but the requirements of a particular qualification may indicate that certain levels of performance in specific units are normally a prerequisite for admission.
- (b) As a matter of principle, BCE or Centres will not discriminate against learners on any of the following grounds:
- Age*
 - disability
 - family responsibilities
 - gender
 - HIV status
 - marital status
 - mental health problems
 - nationality
 - race
 - religious or political views or affiliations
 - sexual orientation
 - socio-economic background

* BCE define 18 years as the minimum age for admission to our Level 3 and 4 Certificate qualifications. However, the final discretion is upon Centres. There is no upper age limit for admission.

(c) The level of non-academic support, which an applicant will require, is specifically excluded from consideration.

4. **Workshops**

4.1 All our staff will use language, which is non-discriminatory and is not gratuitously chosen in order to cause offence to particular groups, in the course of training seminars and workshops. However, it is a fundamental principle of academic freedom that reasoned argument may be employed to test and challenge views, opinions and assertions of all kinds, and in no circumstances may this clause be used to discourage or prevent the exercise of that freedom.

4.2 BCE will take account of the needs of individual Centres and, wherever reasonably practicable within existing constraints, consideration will be given

to issues such as caring for dependants, when seminars and examinations are timetabled.

- 4.3 During seminars, attendees will be allowed to change trainers without difficulty, and the procedure will be widely publicised.

5. **Services and Facilities**

BCE is committed to the principle of equal access by all of its Centres in groups or as individuals to the services it provides and the facilities it offers.

6. **Health and Safety**

- 6.1 BCE aims to provide its staff and Centres with a healthy and safe environment in which to work and live. Detailed policies and codes of practice, and appropriate handbooks, are available and it is the duty of all Centres to familiarise themselves with those and comply with the relevant requirements. The enforcement of reasonable health and safety requirements does not constitute discrimination.
- 6.2 BCE will make every effort to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, all parts of BCE are accessible and safe. The needs of people with disabilities will be given particular consideration.

7. **Disciplinary Procedures**

BCE's Disciplinary Procedures as specified in Staff Misconduct Policy will be kept under review to ensure that they are consistent with our Ethical Policy.

8. **Training**

- 8.1 BCE staff normally having contact with Centres will receive a copy of this Policy supplemented by basic training appropriate to their role within BCE.
- 8.2 Specific advice and training will be given to staff in relation to recruitment and selection, assessment, tutoring and learner disciplinary procedures.

9 **Harassment and Bullying**

BCE has a Policy Statement on Harassment [see Equal Opportunity Policy] and wishes to encourage a culture where harassment and bullying are unable to thrive. Incidents of harassment and bullying are regarded extremely seriously and may be grounds for disciplinary action including dismissal or expulsion.