

Conflicts of Interest policy

External

Abstract

This policy establishes the framework for identifying, disclosing and managing conflicts of interest and outlines prohibited activities, mandatory disclosures requirements and appropriate remedial actions

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1. Audience

This policy is to be read and understood, and followed by all Active IQ approved centres, their staff who have been approved by Active IQ to deliver our qualifications and assessments, and any of our partner suppliers, with whom we may have contractual arrangements which require formal declarations of interest to be made to Active IQ under the terms of your business with us.

1.1. Purpose

This policy is intended to explain and describe Active IQ's approach and processes relating to the identification, management, mitigation and control of any potential or actual conflict of interest arising as a result of any action, role or event occurring within our customers' businesses directly relating to Active IQ's qualifications and requirements. Following this policy will provide sufficient assurance to the regulators that we comply with the relevant Conditions of Recognition where they might apply.

1.2. Roles and responsibilities

The following list explains the responsibilities in relation to this policy

- **Head of Centre (signatory to the Centre Agreement)** – ensure the centre has its own Conflicts of Interest policy, that it is fit for purpose and kept under review, and that all staff involved in the delivery and assessment of Active IQ qualifications are aware and understand their own responsibilities in relation to the policy.
- **Main centre contact** – ensures Active IQ is kept up to date on an agreed basis where standing conflicts may exist, and alert Active IQ as soon as any new conflicts are reported or identified. This must always come in advance of any affected assessments, so suitable controls can be put in place to protect the learner and safeguard the assessment.
- **Internal quality assurance staff (internal verifiers)** – responsible for executing any additional controls where a conflict is being managed, for example, ensuring additional sampling, observation or double assessment, with accompanying reports identifying these additional measures, so Active IQ can monitor the suitability and effectiveness of such mitigations.
- **Assessors, examiners** – ensure all declarations of interests are made as required, avoiding all conflicts where possible, or adhering to additional measures should they be needed. For example, assessors may be re-allocated different learners to assess from an original cohort, to avoid a conflict altogether. Where assessors or examiners are provided with written scripts, post assessment, and they recognise the work is

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that of someone they are connected with which may give rise to a competing interest in the outcome of that assessment they must declare it.

- **Tutors** – where tutors are responsible for carrying out summative assessments or components on behalf of Active IQ, and where those results may contribute to an overall final grade, they must declare their interests where they arise, such that they may also be subject to additional objective scrutiny to ensure an absence of bias in marking such assessments.
- **All other individuals connected to, but not employed by, Active IQ** – adhere to the spirit and requirements of this policy where they may recognise a potential or actual conflict of interest with their obligations to Active IQ, our qualifications and assessment results, versus their own interests elsewhere.

2. Introduction and general principles relating to the management of Conflicts of Interest at Active IQ

Active IQ recognises and encourages the promotion of building successful business and external relationships. In doing so, we are mindful that there may be situations when a perceived or potential conflict of interest may arise, and we have a duty to identify, manage and mitigate potential Conflicts of Interest.

As such, where a potential conflict may be identified, we will follow the procedure outlined in this document, so we maintain ongoing compliance at present and in the foreseeable future.

This requires us to keep an accurate record of possible (or foreseeable) Conflicts of Interest identified to date and describe the arrangements in place to prevent these from occurring.

3. General principles

In implementing our approach to identifying and managing actual/potential Conflicts of Interest, we request all our centres and approved staff agree to the following principles:

- all centres and staff must commit to identifying and managing all actual/potential Conflicts of Interest that may affect Active IQ and, in doing so, raise possible Conflicts of Interest with Active IQ directly (usually either their main point of contact, their appointed External Verifier or the Head of Quality Assurance)
- we ask that centres and staff be proactive in the identification and management of Conflicts of Interest that may affect the validity of our assessments and, by extension, our ability to maintain an acceptable level of regulatory compliance and/or damage to our reputation

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- staff can be open about the nature of any potential/actual Conflicts of Interest and not try to hide or present them in a better light
- strive to identify and deal with Conflicts of Interest as soon as they are identified
- local (centre-based) controls for managing any potential Conflicts of Interest must be proportionate to the risks associated with the identified conflict(s).

4. Definition of a conflict of interest

For the purposes of this policy, we have adopted the definition used by the regulatory authorities in relation to Conflicts of Interest. In essence, a conflict of interest exists in relation to Active IQ, or any of its approved centres, where:

- its interests in any activity undertaken by it, on its behalf by a centre, or by a member of staff, have the potential to lead it to act contrary to its interests in the development, delivery and award of qualifications in accordance with the requirements of the regulator's Conditions of Recognition
- a person who is connected to the delivery or assessment of qualifications on behalf of Active IQ has interests in any other activity which have the potential to lead that person to act contrary to his or her interests in that delivery or assessment, and impact on our compliance with the regulator's Conditions of Recognition
- a member of staff at an Active IQ centre connected to the delivery or assessment of our qualifications has interests in any other activity which have the potential to lead that person to act contrary to his or her interests in the delivery or assessment of our qualifications
- an informed and reasonable observer would conclude that any of these situations was the case.

5. Approach

Active IQ's aim is to identify and manage appropriately all reasonably foreseeable conflicts and treat them appropriately as part of our general approach to risk management. From an external viewpoint this might include the following examples (not exhaustive):

- a member of staff at an approved centre has an interest or relationship with a learner (for example they are teaching or expecting to assess a family member, third party supplier, centre or employee at a centre, a learner) which may see them at risk of being persuaded to act in the third party's interest to the detriment of Active IQ

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- any member of staff or centre who has offered or been offered a gift, preferential rates or treatment by or from a customer or other third party which may encourage them to act against the best interests of Active IQ
- a centre has a member of staff who is also contracted for Active IQ on a sessional basis may be put under inappropriate pressure to act in the best interests of the centre, even when they are performing poorly
- centres have staff who have a family member/close friend/partner working for Active IQ
- an individual who has a financial stake, paid/unpaid/voluntary employment, shares or role in any centre or external company that may have dealings with Active IQ
- an individual who has any membership of an organisation or body, corporate or voluntary, that is connected to, or could be connected to Active IQ
- an individual who also has a link or interest in any of the third parties that Active IQ uses
- any person or organisation which has a financial interest in the successful achievement of learners.

There will be other examples of potential and avoidable conflicts, which is why Active IQ encourages all colleagues to feel confident in raising such conflicts as and when they occur, or are likely to occur, in line with the principles described above.

Where any centre, or staff member within, believes there has been a breach of this policy, or if unforeseen Conflicts of Interest emerge, please contact the Active IQ Head of Quality Assurance as soon as practicable, and a review will be completed to ensure suitable controls or mitigations are put in place to minimise any impact of such a conflict.

6. Process

All Conflicts of Interest should be treated in the following way, and this can be defined as: Report, Record, Action and Review

- **Report** – all approved centres are required to have in place their own Conflicts of Interest policy, as per the terms of Active IQ's Centre Agreement, signed prior to approval. This policy should require all centre staff approved by Active IQ to deliver and/or assess or quality assure our qualifications to declare any known actual or potential Conflicts of Interest which may affect the assessment or results of a registered learner.
- **Record** - Where this arises, a centre may have their own formal recording requirement, and in all cases must report the conflict to Active IQ promptly. This is to ensure Active IQ have both an accurate and up to date register but also oversight

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and agreement on any suitable controls required to mitigate the conflict. To report a conflict of interest to Active IQ, centres must complete the following declaration form: <https://forms.monday.com/forms/5ddb65492e8be74c0240e4da78223416?r=use1>

- **Action** - Relevant controls to be applied may be that a different assessor is allocated to a learner, additional layers of quality assurance and verification such as scrutiny of assessment evidence by another party, or other suitable mitigations to minimise the impact of the conflict, where it cannot be avoided altogether.
- **Review** – the management of all conflicts (where actual, perceived or possible) are kept under review, not least to ensure the controls in place are being observed and effective but also have a review date applied to avoid any conflict lying dormant. This might be where a centre had a member of approved staff with an ongoing conflict, but has since left the organisation, but Active IQ has not been informed.

7. Associated documents

- Active IQ's centre agreement
- Active IQ's malpractice and maladministration policy
- Declaration of interest templates
- Active IQ's CASS strategy
- Active IQ's quality assurance strategy

Staff requirements specific to an individual qualification syllabus and assessment strategy

8. Implementation and dissemination

This policy will be implemented immediately upon approval and available on Active IQ website.

9. Monitoring arrangements

We will review this policy annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements, revising it as necessary in response to customer and learner feedback, or best practice guidance issued by the regulatory authorities. However, a review may be commissioned earlier should an issue arise in relation to an actual or potential conflict of interest and/or in response to customer, learner or regulatory feedback

This policy will be reviewed in six months by relevant Active IQ and NCFE colleagues to ensure document is aligned and fit for purpose following full integration of Active IQ.

10. Data retention

All data pertaining to a potential or actual conflict will be maintained by AIQ for five years.

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11. Contact information

Active IQ's Risk and Assurance Officer.

Email: riskandassurance@activeiq.co.uk