



Business & Computing Examinations (BCE)

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CODE OF PRACTICE

BCE is committed to a policy of equal opportunities in accordance with our mission. It is our aim that potential and actual students 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, or socio-economic background. BCE follows a code of practice to ensure that this policy is fully effective:

Code of Practice

1. Centre Recruitment
2. Examination Assessment
3. Curriculum
4. Workshops
5. Services and Facilities
6. Health and Safety
7. Disciplinary Procedures
8. Training
9. Harassment and Bullying

1. Centre Recruitment

1.1 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 course program structure, minimum duration times, exam fees, exam timetables etc. Frequent training seminars are run throughout the year.

1.2 The exam board's aim is to help candidates benefit intellectually from different courses.

1.3 We encourage centres to carefully assess whether a candidate can start at Certificate, Diploma or Advanced Diploma level. However, other evidence relating to the student'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.

1.4 In assessing academic level, the following particular considerations apply:

(a) The exam board recognises many qualifications as meeting the general entry requirement but the requirements of a particular course may indicate that certain levels of performance in specific subjects are normally a prerequisite for admission.

(b) As a matter of principle the exam board or centres will not discriminate against candidates 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
- socio-economic background

* The exam board define 18 years as the minimum age for sitting the examinations. 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.

2. Examination Assessment

2.1 BCE's objective is to provide a fair method of assessment for equality of opportunity to all of its candidates.

2.2 Special arrangements will be made available to candidates with known disabilities, to compensate for the restrictions imposed by the disability without affecting the validity of examinations and assessments.

2.3 When an examiner/moderator is appointed to examine a taught course or check exam marked papers, BCE will draw his or her attention to the exam board's Policy on Equal Opportunities. The exam board expects all examiners/moderators to act in accordance with this policy.

As an organisation dedicated to the improvement of measurement and evaluation practice in examination, BCE has adopted this Code 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 Code of Practice, hereinafter referred to as the Code, is to guide the conduct of BCE members who are involved in any tinge of assessment activity.

The code enumerates professional responsibilities in eight major areas of assessment activity. Specifically, the Code presents the professional responsibilities of those who:

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

General Responsibilities

The professional responsibilities promulgated in this Code in 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 candidates
- 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 examination centres and agencies that provide educational services and
- vii. perform all professional responsibilities with honesty, integrity, due care and fairness.

2.3.1 Responsibilities of those who Develop Assessment products and those who mark the examinations

Those who develop assessment products and services, such as examiners and assessment specialists (those who set the examinations), have a professional responsibility to strive to produce assessments that are of highest quality. Persons who develop assessments have a professional responsibility 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 candidates 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 and mark the assessment, including up to date information used to support the reliability, validity, marking and reporting processes, and other relevant characteristics of the assessment.

- 2.3.1.7 Protect the rights to privacy of those who are assessed as part of the assessment development process.
- 2.3.1.8 Caution everybody involved, in clear and prominent language, against the most likely misinterpretations and misuses of data that arise out the assessment development process.
- 2.3.1.9 Avoid false or unsubstantiated claims in exam preparation and program support materials and services about an assessment or its use and interpretation.
- 2.3.1.10 Correct any substantive inaccuracies in assessments or their support materials as soon as feasible.
- 2.3.1.11 Develop result reports and support materials that promote the understanding of assessment results.

2.3.2 Responsibilities of those who Market and Promote Assessment Products and Services

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

- 2.3.2.1 Provide accurate information to potential examination centres about assessment products and services and their recommended levels and limitations.
- 2.3.2.2 Not knowingly withhold relevant information about assessment products and services that might affect an appropriate selection decision.
- 2.3.2.3 Base all claims about assessment products and services on valid interpretations of publicly available information.
- 2.3.2.4 Allow qualified users equal opportunity to purchase assessment products and services.
- 2.3.2.5 Establish the stated fees for assessment products and services.
- 2.3.2.6 Communicate to potential users, well in advanced, all applicable fees associated with assessment products and services.
- 2.3.2.7 Maintain a current understanding about assessment products and services and their appropriate uses in education.
- 2.3.2.8 Avoid making claims that assessment products and services have been endorsed by another organisation unless an official endorsement has been obtained.

2.3.3 Responsibilities of those who Select Assessment Products and Services

Those who select 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 assessment products and services have a professional responsibility 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 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 the authors, publishers, or others involved with the 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 assessment for the intended uses, likely consequences of use, protection of examinee rights, relative costs, materials and services needed to conduct or use the 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 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 assessments being reviewed.
- 2.3.3.7 Immediately disclose any attempts by others to exert undue influence on the assessment selection process.

2.3.4. Responsibilities of those who Administer Assessments

Those who prepare individuals 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 responsibility to:

- 2.3.4.1 Inform the candidates 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 student 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 Responsibilities 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 responsibility 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 candidates promptly of any deviation in the planning marking and reporting service or schedule.
- 2.3.5.5 Provide corrected marked results to the candidates 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 Responsibilities 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 responsibility 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 programs 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 candidates 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. Responsibilities of those Who Educate Others About Assessment

The process of educating others about 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 assessment have a professional responsibility 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 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 student performance in a course if the use or reporting of results is likely to harm any student.
- 2.3.7.6 Protect all secure assessments and materials used in the instructional process.
- 2.3.7.7 Model responsible 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 assessment issues being discussed by policymakers etc.

2.3.8. Responsibilities of those Who Evaluate Educational Programs and Conduct Research on Assessments

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

As stated at the outset, the purpose of the Code of Practice is to serve as a guide to the conduct to BCE members who are engaged in any type of assessment activity in education.

The Code is intended to serve as an educational function: to inform and remind those involved in educational assessment of their obligations to uphold the integrity of the manner in which assessments are developed, used, evaluated, and marketed. Moreover, it is expected that the Code will stimulate thoughtful discussion of what constitutes professionally responsible assessment practice at all levels in professional education.

3. Curriculum

3.1 BCE recognises the importance of the development of an individual through the educational process and the role of the curriculum in ensuring that this development is fulfilled.

3.2 BCE is therefore committed to the promotion of equal opportunity with respect to course content, approaches to teaching and learning, assessment methods and the structure and timetabling of courses of study. Further, it will aim to ensure that documents such as course submissions, teaching materials and examination papers reflect the principles of equal opportunities.

3.3 The exam board will aim to provide a programme of courses 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.

3.4 The exam board will encourage perspectives which reflect the cultural diversity of our society and which are neither gender dominated nor ethnocentric.

3.5 The exam board will encourage and appraise from an equal opportunities 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.

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 The exam board 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

5.1 The exam board 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, so far as reasonably practicable, all parts of the exam board are accessible and safe. The needs of people with disabilities will be given particular consideration.

7. Disciplinary Procedures

7.1 The exam board's Disciplinary Procedures will be kept under review to ensure that they are consistent with our Equal Opportunities Policy.

8. Training

8.1 All exam board staff normally having contact with centres will receive a copy of this Policy and Code of Practice supplemented by basic training appropriate to their role in the exam board.

8.2 Specific advice and training will be given to staff in relation to recruitment and selection, assessment, tutoring and student disciplinary procedures.

9. Harassment and Bullying

9.1 The exam board has a Policy Statement on Harassment 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.

9.2 The exam board has established an Anti-Harassment Network to assist with complaints of harassment and bullying from staff or centres.