

Examination Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy governs ASSA's examination process. This policy is underpinned by the ASSA Code of Conduct with an objective to ensure that the integrity of all ASSA examinations is upheld. The policy aims to enable ASSA to fulfil its commitment to providing examinations within acceptable education governance standards.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the ASSA-administered examinations only. Where the administration of examinations or services that relate to examinations are outsourced, candidates would need to comply with the respective third-party policies and procedures. Candidates may be required to accept third-party policies where this is relevant to continue with the examination.

3. Examination governance

The Board of Examiners is the approving authority of the policy as recommended by the Education Board appointed by the Council. The ASSA office is responsible for the implementation of the policy. Examination scripts will only be regarded as a valid attempt if there is no breach to this policy. However, the validity of scripts remains at the discretion of the Board of Examiners. The results released by the Board of Examiners will be final.

The Board of Examiners will implement appropriate sanctions to apply to candidates where examination governance standards are compromised. Breaches to examination governance standards include, but are not limited to:

- Unprofessional conduct as described in this ASSA Code of Conduct.
- Soliciting assistance from another person or excluded resources and tools during the examination.
- Utilising prohibited equipment during the examination.
- Non-adherence to examination rules, instructions and specifications as communicated to candidates.
- Unable to positively identify yourself when presenting for the examination.
- Not being invigilated for a part of or the full duration of the examination by ASSA-approved proctoring systems.
- Seeking mitigating circumstances by writing comments on the content that is submitted for marking.
- Identification other than candidate number on the content submitted for marking.

The Board of Examiners reserves the right to withhold the results of any one candidate or a cohort of candidates where there is an investigation pending that was referred to the Disciplinary Committee; or where an incident reported for mitigating circumstances is still under consideration. Where the Board of Examiners becomes aware of incidents that affect a larger cohort of candidates, it will agree on the most appropriate course of action to minimise the effect on all the candidates. The Board of Examiners may declare the outcomes of an examination to be null and void in exceptional circumstances that warrant such drastic action.

4. Conduct

Candidates are subject to the Code of Conduct and disciplinary procedures of ASSA. Misconduct or cheating during an examination is a serious offense that will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee for further investigation. ASSA has a zero-tolerance approach toward cheating and dishonesty during the examination process. Sanctions may apply to candidates suspected of any dishonesty. The default sanction for candidates found guilty of cheating is that they be expelled from the Society and have their names published.

Candidates are required to complete the examination without any assistance from another individual or individuals and may not help another individual or individuals in completing their examination. Candidates that are aware of cheating have a responsibility to report this or risk being found complicit to the act.

Persons who are aware of candidates who have cheated, plan to cheat, or display suspicious behaviour can contact tip-off@actuarialsociety.org.za. Your identity will be protected. You will be required to furnish enough information to initiate an investigation.

Candidates may not access any notes, material, software, device, website or social media content in any form that is not explicitly permitted during the examination. For open book examinations, where content is permitted, candidates must adhere to the rules as communicated on the ASSA website. All candidates will be allowed to have a clean exam pad to be used as scrap paper during the examination.

5. Infrastructure

5.1 Technology

It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that technology requirements as recommended by ASSA and the third-party examination provider are in good working order prior to the examination. Candidates must access and test the software that they will be required to use prior to the examination and make sure that any restrictions in accessing the examination and proctoring tools are addressed in advance of the examination. For virtual examinations, testing must be performed in the same technical and physical environment that the actual examination will be written to minimise the risk of something not working. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that software used in the examination is appropriately licenced where candidates use their own equipment.

It is the candidate's responsibility to save their work regularly during the examination and to ensure autosave is enabled. Candidates are responsible for uploading the correct content for submission of the examination in the format, size and location as communicated. Once the answer files are submitted, they cannot be changed or retracted. Where files are uploaded this must be done within the scheduled examination time. Late submission of files will not be considered for marking nor files that are password protected. Only in the event of an operational incident that is unplanned and unexpected may answer files be submitted through the incident portal. Accepting these files for marking is at the discretion of the examiners considering various risk and operational factors.

Candidates are allowed the use of only one computer (PC) for the purpose of accessing and completing the examination. Dual screening is not allowed unless approved otherwise for a specific examination. TV screens, or any other projection screens, are not allowed to be used as PC monitors. An external keyboard and mouse are allowed, these must be without any storage capacity or devices as part of the keyboard or mouse.

Listening and / or transmission devices including, but not limited to earphones, headphones, earplugs, wrist watches and stopwatches are not allowed. Mobile devices (cellular phone) must be switched off during the examination and not be within accessible reach of the candidate during the examination. Mobile devices will only be permitted on a selective basis for a specific purpose before and after the examination as communicated in the examination rules prior to the examination where this is applicable.

Candidates who experience technology failures during the examination must continue as best they can under the circumstances. It is important to keep a log of these issues with supporting evidence where possible to strengthen the evidence when reporting this as an incident after the examination.

5.2 Physical environment

Candidates must write the examination at the examination centre they have registered at.

Candidates are responsible for checking that the physical environment in which the examination will be performed is quiet with adequate desk space, lighting, and electrical points to complete the examination, and that reasonable precautions have been taken to manage unexpected disruption in the examination. Comfort objects are not allowed on the examination desk space and candidates are not permitted to leave the examination environment during the examination. The examination must be performed in isolation from other people. Candidates may be required to show their physical environment to an online invigilator depending on the method of examination that applies.

In the unfortunate event that a candidate is required to evacuate from the location during an examination, no communication is permitted with anyone else during this period of absence from the examination. The candidate is encouraged to return to the examination and complete it as best possible following the evacuation and to then complete an incident report after the examination.

6. Assessment

The Principal Examiner of each subject, in consultation with the Board of Examiners, is responsible to ensure that the assessment method applied is effective and that it provides candidates with a test environment for fair assessment. The candidate experience and operational risks, including but not limited to fraud risk, are carefully considered for each subject in selecting the most appropriate assessment method. The assessment method is therefore adaptive and subject dependent.

6.1 Instructions

Examination instructions will be available to candidates and must be read with due care. Handwritten examinations are permitted for select subjects and where candidates have approved special concession to hand write. It is essential that candidates participate in the preparation and testing sessions that will be scheduled in advance of the actual examination to become familiar with the software and environment, including the overall experience that can be expected on the day of the examination. The onus is on the candidate to read and implement the examination instructions on the examination day and not to rely on the proctor whose function is to complete registration and environment check processes and to maintain proper conduct in accordance with examination regulations.

6.2 Time allocation

The Board of Examiners determines the time allocation of the examination for each subject including the amount of additional time to be allocated where there is enough reason to do so based on the assessment method. Candidates are expected to start the examination at the scheduled time. Candidates with approved extra time will retain the additional time granted. Candidates must adhere to reading time as directed in the examination instructions. Submission of online examinations must be completed and submitted within the time allocated. No late submissions of examination scripts will be accepted. There is zero-tolerance for candidates with potential time advantage writing during the time allocated to upload scripts.

6.3 Identification

Candidates may under no circumstances share their username and password to the examination systems with any person at any time. Sharing this information compromises the individual's identity for the purpose of examinations. Candidates will be required to positively identify themselves in person and by valid government-issued photographed identity at the beginning of an examination. Candidates must be identifiable for the duration of the examination. If proctored online, the lighting must be adequate to ensure the candidate's identification is always clear with head and shoulders visible and face not obscured. No headgear or head coverings including hoodie caps, caps, hats, beanies and other headwear is permitted. Exceptions of head coverings for religious and cultural reasons may be considered subject to inspection and sight of ears.

Examination scripts are assessed anonymously and for this purpose, candidates must use their candidate number as reflected on the examination permit on scripts submitted. Candidates must not put their names or member number on the answer template provided.

6.4 Invigilation

Candidates need to access the online examination through the ASSA Exam Platform. Invigilation is mandatory for all examinations for the full duration of the examination, either by virtual proctoring (candidates sitting remotely) or in-person invigilation (candidates sitting at ASSA-designated venues) by ASSA-contracted service providers. Candidates will be required to have their head and shoulders visible on a webcam with a microphone turned on throughout the examination when they sit their examination virtually.

In-person invigilation is strongly advised where the necessary technology will be made available to candidates at the ASSA-designated venues.

7. Incidents

An incident is any unexpected event that is not in the control of the candidate or an unplanned event that occurs at the time of examination and that has a significant and material adverse effect on the candidate's performance of the examination. This includes, but is not limited to technology failures, victim of crime and violence or medical emergencies. Candidates are expected to adjust for, and manage to minimise, the effect of any pre-existing conditions and circumstances.

In addition to operational incidents, candidates are required to self-report any deviation from the examination policy and rules as communicated; that was unavoidable as observed during the examination. Mitigating circumstances in determining the sanction will only be considered for candidates who have self-reported an incident and fully tested all components of the Test Exams.

Candidates are not allowed to write or type comments seeking mitigating circumstances from the marker on the content provided for marking. Mitigating circumstances must be requested through the incident management platform. Incidents are investigated independent to the marking of the examination and considered on a case-by-case basis by the Board of Examiners.

Candidates will be required to complete the candidate incident report immediately after the examination but no later than 24 hours after the examination including evidence in support of the incident. Only candidates who have reported an incident are eligible for consideration of mitigating circumstances as it impacts the outcome of the assessment.

Information provided in the reporting of an incident will be treated sensitively and will remain confidential.

8. Access to unmarked scripts

Candidates will be able to access their scripts submitted through the ASSA Exam Platform after the examination for a limited period unless otherwise instructed. Queries from candidates concerning their marks will not be entertained. Candidates must raise mark related queries through the formal processes and according to the Appeals Policy implemented for this purpose.

For examinations where access to candidate scripts is not permitted, candidates may be required to destroy all copies of scripts, and any other material as this relates to the examination, in the presence of an invigilator once the scripts have been submitted on the ASSA Exam Platform.

9. Recourse

Candidates can apply for a refund in line with the refund policy. Late deregistration will be subject to an administrative levy. Candidates have the right to appeal the outcome of an examination in accordance with the appeal policy that is subject to counselling. Where operational disruptions were the result of technological failures under the direct or indirect control of ASSA, ASSA will apply appropriate recourse to impacted candidates.

10. Copyright

Candidates should assume that all material, in whatever style or format, contained in the ASSA Website/ASSA Exam Platform, or any other application used for the purpose of assessment (hereinafter referred to as the ASSA Technology), are the copyrighted property of ASSA, unless otherwise noted, or are the copyrighted property of third parties. Unauthorised use of the materials is strictly prohibited and is a violation of the rights of ASSA and/or third parties, including, without limitation, under copyright laws, trademark laws or any other laws.

11. Disclaimer

Under no circumstances shall ASSA, any office bearer and/or agent of ASSA have any form of liability whatsoever and however arising to the candidate for any loss or damage (including legal fees) of any kind incurred as a result of the access of the ASSA Technology, and/or the submission of any information via these applications, and / or the downloading of any material, data, text, images, video, or audio including, without limitation, damage to, or viruses that may infect the candidate's computer equipment or other property as a result thereof. Without limiting the foregoing, everything on the ASSA Technology is provided "as-is" without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied. The candidate's use of and access to the ASSA Technology is solely at the candidate's own risk and liability.

Without deteriorating from the above, the candidate acknowledges that accessing and submitting information on the ASSA Technology via the world wide web has inherent risk due to interruption of connectivity and/or delays in the transmission of data that may be caused by factors over which ASSA has no control. The candidate absolves ASSA and holds its office bearers and/or agents harmless against any loss or damage of any kind incurred because of the aforesaid.