

ASSA Exam Fact of the Day:

Examination Incidents, Reporting and Investigation

Candidates should understand how examination incidents and examination governance are managed, including what constitutes an examination incident, how incidents must be reported, what happens after an incident is identified, and how potential breaches of examination requirements are investigated and considered.

The same incident reporting and governance processes apply whether you are writing at an ASSA examination venue or remotely.



What is an examination incident?

For the purposes of ASSA examinations, an examination incident includes:

- an **unexpected or unplanned event outside your control** that occurs at the time of the examination and has a significant and material adverse effect on your examination performance; or
- an **unavoidable deviation from the examination policies, assessment regulations or examination instructions** that occurs during your examination.

An unexpected or unplanned event may include, but is not limited to:

- technology failures;
- being the victim of crime or violence; or
- a medical emergency.

Candidates are expected, where reasonably possible, to plan for and manage the effect of any pre-existing conditions or circumstances.

It is important to understand that an incident does not only mean that something has gone wrong and affected your ability to write the examination.

If circumstances during the examination result in an unavoidable deviation from any examination rule, policy, regulation or instruction, you are required to self-report that deviation as an examination incident, even where you do not believe that it affected your examination performance.

Self-reporting a deviation enables ASSA to understand the circumstances in which it occurred and to consider any relevant mitigating circumstances as part of the investigation.

What should you do if an incident occurs during your examination?

If you experience an incident during your examination:

- request assistance from your **invigilator or proctor**, where required;
- continue to follow the instructions provided on the **ASSA Exam Platform** and by your invigilator or proctor;
- where possible, **take screenshots or retain other relevant evidence** of the incident; and
- **self-report the incident using the Incident Management Form** available on the ASSA Exam Platform.

The responsibility remains with you to ensure that the incident is formally reported. Reporting an incident to, or requesting assistance from, an invigilator or proctor does not replace the requirement to complete the Incident Management Form.

All examination incidents must be submitted through the Incident Management Form. Incident reports submitted by email or telephone will not be accepted.

When must an incident be reported?

You have 24 hours from the start of your examination to submit your incident report.

Where possible, the Incident Management Form should be completed immediately after the examination and should include any evidence supporting the incident.

Only candidates who have formally reported an incident are eligible for consideration of mitigating circumstances where these may affect the outcome of the assessment.

Where the incident relates to a technical matter, mitigating circumstances in determining any sanction may only be considered where the candidate has fully tested all components of the Test Exams.

Information provided when reporting an incident will be treated sensitively and will remain confidential.

Do not include mitigating circumstances in your answer script

Your examination answer script is provided to markers for assessment and must not contain comments or requests asking the marker to consider mitigating circumstances.

Mitigating circumstances must be reported through the Incident Management Form and are considered independently of the marking process.

Seeking mitigating circumstances through comments included in content submitted for marking may itself constitute a breach of examination governance requirements.

Incidents may also be reported to ASSA

Candidates are not the only source of examination incident reports.

All examination incidents and potential deviations from the examination policies, Assessment Regulations and examination instructions observed during an examination may also be reported to ASSA by invigilators, proctors or ASSA's examination systems for investigation.

This means that a matter may be investigated even where a candidate has not submitted an Incident Management Form.

Where you are aware that an incident or unavoidable deviation has occurred, however, you remain responsible for self-reporting the matter in accordance with the incident reporting requirements.

What happens when an incident is reported or identified?

Incidents are investigated independently of the marking of the examination and are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Whether an incident is self-reported by a candidate or identified through ASSA's systems, invigilators or proctors, relevant matters are considered through ASSA's structured three-tier governance process:

1. Investigation

Relevant evidence is reviewed. Depending on the matter, this may include:

- the candidate's Incident Management Form and supporting evidence;
- system logs;
- invigilator or proctor reports;
- video recordings; and
- relevant communication with the candidate.

The investigation considers the circumstances of the incident or deviation and the available supporting evidence. Following the investigation, recommendations are prepared for consideration through the decision process.

2. Decision

The available evidence and recommendations are independently considered through the relevant examiner and operational governance structures to determine the appropriate outcome.

Where mitigating circumstances have been requested, these are considered on a case-by-case basis by the Board of Examiners.

Where examination governance standards have been compromised, the Board of Examiners will determine any appropriate outcome or sanction having regard to the circumstances and evidence available.

3. Appeal

Where a candidate has a right of appeal and elects to appeal a decision, the matter is independently reconsidered.

The appeal structure considers the evidence afresh, including any relevant mitigating factors provided by the candidate, and has the authority to uphold, amend or overturn the previous decision.

How long does the process take?

A proper investigation requires the available evidence to be gathered and carefully considered. Depending on the nature and complexity of the matter, this process may take several weeks.

ASSA staff cannot provide individual updates or feedback while specific incident investigations are in progress. This supports the fairness, consistency and integrity of the process.

You will be notified once an outcome has been reached.

In some circumstances, the Board of Examiners may withhold a candidate's result, or the results of a cohort of candidates, while a relevant investigation or consideration of mitigating circumstances remains outstanding.

Potential breaches of examination governance

The Board of Examiners may apply an appropriate sanction where examination governance standards have been compromised.

Potential breaches include, but are not limited to:

- unprofessional conduct as described in the ASSA Code of Conduct;
- soliciting assistance from another person or using excluded resources or tools during an examination;
- using prohibited equipment;
- failing to comply with examination rules, instructions or specifications communicated to candidates;
- being unable to positively identify yourself when presenting for an examination;
- not being invigilated through ASSA-approved invigilation or proctoring arrangements for part or all of the examination;
- seeking mitigating circumstances through comments included in content submitted for marking; and
- including identifying information other than your candidate number in content submitted for marking.

The outcome of an investigation will depend on the circumstances and evidence relating to the matter.

Where an incident affects a larger cohort of candidates, the Board of Examiners will determine the most appropriate course of action to minimise the effect on affected candidates. In exceptional circumstances, the Board of Examiners may declare the outcomes of an examination **null and void** where the circumstances warrant such action.

Reporting suspected cheating

Candidates who become aware of cheating have a responsibility to report it. A candidate who is aware of cheating and does not report it may risk being found complicit in the conduct.

If you are aware that a candidate has cheated, plans to cheat or has displayed suspicious behaviour, this may be reported confidentially to tip-off@actuarialsociety.org.za.

Your identity will be protected. Sufficient information must, however, be provided to enable an investigation to be initiated.

Remember

If an incident occurs during your examination:

- seek assistance from your invigilator or proctor where required;
- retain evidence where possible;
- self-report any unexpected event that materially affects your examination, as well as any unavoidable deviation from examination policies, assessment regulations or examination instructions;
- submit the Incident Management Form within 24 hours from the start of your examination;
- do not report mitigating circumstances in your answer script; and
- remember that incident investigation and the marking of your examination are separate processes.

Understanding and following the incident reporting process ensures that ASSA has the information required to investigate examination incidents and consider relevant circumstances consistently and fairly.