



Fraudulent Qualifications Guidance

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Introduction

ICE has a duty to make sure that qualifications used to apply for professional registration and membership are authentic. This helps us maintain professional standards and integrity.

This guide explains what fraudulent qualifications are and the steps we take to check qualifications. It also gives advice on how to recognise potentially fraudulent colleges and universities.

What are fraudulent qualifications?

Fraudulent qualifications could be:

- Forged degree certificates which are copies of degrees from genuine universities
- Degrees from 'fake' universities and 'degree mills' which have been purchased
- Degrees from 'fake' universities and 'degree mills', that are gained when work has been submitted in good faith. In this case the fraudulent qualifications may have been gained unintentionally
- Qualifications submitted as a result of identity/qualification theft
- Fraudulent certification (e.g. health and safety qualifications), not necessarily required for membership, but which would misrepresent the applicant's experience

Trainees may also have genuine qualifications from recognised awarding bodies but delivered by private training providers which have subsequently been closed because of fraud.

Legislation

The following UK legislation helps prevent the use of fraudulent qualifications.

Data Protection Act 1998

'Section 29 of the Data Protection Act 1998 exempts personal data for the purposes of the prevention or detection of crime from the non-disclosure provisions.'

This allows us to carry out checks – with universities and professional bodies, for example – to ensure qualifications are genuine.

Fraud Act 2006

'Section 2(1) of the Fraud Act 2006, fraud by false representation, whereby it is an offence for someone dishonestly to make a false representation in order to make a gain for himself or another.'

Submitting a qualification, that isn't authentic, to apply for ICE membership is likely to be fraud. That's because it's benefitting the applicant and could also result in risk or loss to an employer who thought they were employing a qualified person.

Authenticating applicants' qualifications

When applicants/members submit qualifications, they're required to send copies of their original certificates. These must be authenticated as true copies by a lecturer at the applicant's university, a senior member of their employing company or a corporate ICE member.

In certain circumstances, applicants may bring original certificates to ICE offices to be copied and authenticated.

Anyone authenticating a copy of a certificate must first see the original certificate. They can't assume, for example, that original certificates have been seen by an organisation's HR department or a university's registry.

Recognising a genuine university

These databases and websites will help you find out if a UK college or university is genuine:

- [Engineering Council list of accredited courses](#)
- [Joint Board of Moderators' \(JBM\) list of accredited and approved courses](#)
- [UCAS](#)
- [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#)
- [GOV.UK – the website for the UK government](#)

If you're concerned about the status of an overseas university, please seek advice from the Education and Learning team by emailing details of the university or college and the course you're interested in to aqp@ice.org.uk.

Recognising a fraudulent university

A university or college may be fraudulent if:

- It offers degrees in significantly less time than a traditional college or university
- It offers credits for life experience
- It sends you a diploma if you pay a fee
- It offers discounts if you enrol in more than one degree course
- Its address is a post office box number
- Its website does not include information that a traditional college website might include, such as a mission statement, entry requirements and course requirements for specific courses, library resources, and faculty information
- There are few photographs of the buildings and more of the locality
- The name of the college or university is similar to a well-known and well-respected college or

university

The following websites provide further examples of bogus degrees and diploma mills. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (USA) can also answer questions on the status of an overseas university or college.

- http://www.diplomamills.nl/Engels/what_is_it.htm
- <http://www2.ed.gov/students/prep/college/diplomamills/diploma-mills.html>
- <http://www.chea.org/degremills/frmPaper.htm>

The [Engineering Council](#) has also issued guidance regarding fake registration certificates.

Follow-up action and investigation

If you have any concerns about qualifications, you should let our Education and Learning team know on 0207 665 2247 or by emailing aqp@ice.org.uk

The Education and Learning team – supported by the IPD, CPD and Subscriptions teams - is responsible for investigating potentially fraudulent qualifications that have been used in membership applications.

If fraudulent qualifications are submitted, the applicant could be referred to the Professional Conduct Panel and Disciplinary Board, Trading Standards or the police.

You may be advised not to include qualifications when you're uncertain about the status of the awarding university or college.

If you've submitted work towards a qualification in good faith, and the university or college turns out to be fraudulent, that work can be sent to our Academic Qualifications Panel for consideration.

We retain all records from Disciplinary Board proceedings, and the names of non-members who've submitted fraudulent qualifications.

Further support or information

If you need advice or have any questions about these issues, you can get in touch with our Education and Learning Team on +44 0 207 665 2247 or by emailing aqp@ice.org.uk

Our vision

Civil engineers at the heart of society, delivering sustainable development through knowledge, skills and professional expertise.

Core purpose

- To develop and qualify professionals engaged in civil engineering
- To exchange knowledge and best practice for the creation of a sustainable and built environment
- To promote our contribution to society worldwide

Diversity statement

As a membership organisation and an employer, we value diversity and inclusion - a foundation for great engineering achievement

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