

HN and Vocational Qualifications 2023–24: Candidate Malpractice Data

Malpractice terminology

Categories of malpractice

Breach of assessment conditions — Breaching the defined assessment conditions, such as by completing work outside of controlled conditions.

Collusion — Colluding with other candidates when the assessment should be completed by individual candidates. Examples of collusion include copying work from another candidate; sharing work with another candidate; and/or working collaboratively with other candidates on tasks that should be completed individually.

Frivolous content — Producing content that is unrelated to the exam paper, or to any question that is in the exam script or coursework.

Misconduct — Behaviour in the exam room that causes disruption to others. This includes talking, shouting, abusive or aggressive behaviour or language, and having a prohibited electronic device that emits any kind of sound in the exam room.

Offensive content — Content in scripts or coursework that includes vulgarity and swearing that is outwith the context of the assessment, or any material of a discriminatory nature (including racism, sexism and homophobia).

Personation — Assuming the identity of another candidate or a candidate having someone assume their identity during an assessment.

Plagiarism — Failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of work that is not the candidate's own (this could be another person's work or work taken from a generative AI source).

Prohibited items — Physical possession of prohibited items (including mobile phones, electronic devices, handwritten notes, etc) in the exam room.

Penalty definitions

Written Warning — A warning given to a candidate that will be taken into account should there be any future breach of SQA rules.

Warning with Revision of Marks — Marks awarded are revised in cases of collusion and plagiarism in the candidate's work.

Cancellation of award — Cancellation of external award

Cancellation of component – Cancellation of all marks gained from the component in which malpractice was identified.

Candidate withdrawn from qualification — Candidate will not complete or receive the qualification unless they are allowed to re-enter at a later date.

Candidate not entered for qualification — As a result of malpractice being identified, staff at the centre have decided not to register the candidate for a qualification.

Data

Category	HN/VQ 2024 Number of instances of malpractice by category
Plagiarism	6
Personation	*
Prohibited items: mobile telephones	*
Copying or paraphrasing responses of AI generated content	*
Total	13

Penalty	HN/VQ 2024 Number of penalties issued to candidates
Candidate withdrawn from qualification	5
Written warning	7
Candidate not entered for qualification	*
Total	13

* The number of penalties is not reported for categories with fewer than five instances, so that individual candidates cannot be identified.

Comments

In January 2023, SQA took the opportunity to review all existing centre and candidate malpractice approaches, processes, and guidance.

Following this review in April 2023, an additional candidate malpractice process was introduced supporting centres delivering HN and Vocational qualifications. This includes centres in the rest of the UK and internationally that offer SQA Advanced Qualifications. The process was based on existing procedures and built on expertise from the National Qualifications and Centre Malpractice teams.

SQA decided to make the new process more centralised and managed by a specific team, ensuring that all investigations, outcomes, and reporting were conducted by individuals with appropriate skills, experience, and authority.

Aligning the annual reporting of malpractice with the sessional National Qualifications window (August – July), fewer than five cases of candidate malpractice for HN and vocational qualifications were reported for the period April – July 2023.