

Higher Nationals and Vocational Qualifications 2024–25: Candidate Malpractice Data

Malpractice terminology

Categories of malpractice

Breach of assessment conditions — Breaching the defined assessment conditions, such as 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 out with 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 another person's work as if it were the candidate's own.

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

Copying or paraphrasing responses of AI generated content — Act of either directly replicating or rewording the output produced by Artificial Intelligence.

Penalty definitions

Written warning — A warning given to a candidate that will be taken into account should there be any future breach of Qualifications Scotland 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 the award in which the malpractice was identified.

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Candidate withdrawn from qualification — Candidate will not complete or receive the qualification unless they are allowed to re-enter at a later date.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 — Candidate has not been officially registered with Qualifications Scotland and will not be able to complete the qualification.

Data

Category	HN/VQ 2025 Number of instances of malpractice	HN/VQ 2024 Number of instances of malpractice
Plagiarism	4	6
Personation	-	2
Prohibited items: mobile phones, notes and so on	2	1
Copying or paraphrasing responses of AI generated content	3	4
Identified as centre maladministration	1	-

Penalty	HN/VQ 2025 Number of penalties issued to candidates	HN/VQ 2024 Number of penalties issued to candidates
Candidate withdrawn from qualification	3	5
Written warning and resubmission of evidence	5	7
Candidate not entered for qualification	1	1

Comments

Overall activity levels remained consistent in the 2024–25 session, with no notable trends emerging in relation to qualification type or malpractice category. One case was appealed in 2025 which was fully upheld.

All guidance materials, malpractice reporting forms, and associated mailboxes have been updated to reflect the transition to Qualifications Scotland.