



Candidate Malpractice Data

On 7 July 2023, under its statutory duty as the regulator for National Qualifications in Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) published information on malpractice in the 2021–22 academic session.

In 2021-22, the National Qualification exam diet returned after the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 diets. Course modifications were in place across National Qualifications courses, often with removed or reduced coursework components. Because of these modifications, any comparisons with the candidate malpractice data from the 2019 diet should be applied with caution.

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, etc) in the exam room.

Penalty definitions

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

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

c. **Cancellation of award** — Cancellation of external award

d. **Cancellation of component*** — Cancellation of all marks gained from the component in which malpractice was identified.

Data

	NQ 2022	NQ 2021**	NQ 2020**	NQ 2019
Category	Number of penalties issued to candidates by category	Number of penalties issued to candidates by category	Number of penalties issued to candidates by category	Number of penalties issued to candidates by category
Breach of assessment conditions	0	0	n/a	n/a
Collusion	***	0	0	16
Frivolous/Offensive content	***	0	0	7
Misconduct	***	0	0	***
Personation	0	0	0	***
Plagiarism	30	0	0	61
Prohibited items: mobile telephones	24	0	0	32
Prohibited items: notes, etc	12	0	0	33
Totals	76	0	0	150

	NQ 2022	NQ 2021**	NQ 2020**	NQ 2019
Penalty	Number of penalties issued to candidates by consequence	Number of penalties issued to candidates by consequence	Number of penalties issued to candidates by consequence	Number of penalties issued to candidates by consequence
Warning	17	0	0	32
Warning — Revision of Marks	***	0	0	25
Cancellation of Award	5	0	0	93
Cancellation of Component*	52	N/A	N/A	N/A
Totals	76	0	0	150

* The ‘cancellation of component’ penalty was introduced for the first time by SQA in 2022. This provides a more proportionate penalty than ‘cancellation of award’ in many of the investigated cases and is in line with other UK awarding bodies.

** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 exam diets no instances of candidate malpractice were identified in 2019–20 or in 2020–21. Consequently, no penalties were applied.

*** The number of penalties is not reported for categories with fewer than 5 instances, so that individual candidates cannot be identified.