

Candidate Malpractice Data

On 27 March 2024, under its statutory duty as the regulator for National Qualifications in Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) published information on malpractice in the 2022–23 academic session.

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

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.

Data

Category	NQ 2023 Number of penalties issued to candidates by category	NQ 2022 Number of penalties issued to candidates by category	NQ 2021** Number of penalties issued to candidates by category	NQ 2020** Number of penalties issued to candidates by category	NQ 2019 Number of penalties issued to candidates by category
Breach of assessment conditions	*	*	*	n/a	n/a
Collusion	16	*	*	*	16
Frivolous/offensive content	*	*	*	*	7
Misconduct	7	*	*	*	*
Personation	*	*	*	*	*
Plagiarism	54	30	*	*	61
Prohibited items: mobile telephones	38	24	*	*	32
Prohibited items: notes, etc	27	12	*	*	33
Totals	145	76	*	*	150

Penalty	NQ 2023 Number of penalties issued to candidates by consequence	NQ 2022 Number of penalties issued to candidates by consequence	NQ 2021** Number of penalties issued to candidates by consequence	NQ 2020** Number of penalties issued to candidates by consequence	NQ 2019 Number of penalties issued to candidates by consequence
Warning	35	17	*	*	32
Warning — Revision of Marks	15	*	*	*	25
Cancellation of Award	13	5	*	*	93
Cancellation of Component	82	52	N/A	N/A	N/A
Totals	145	76	*	*	150

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

** 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.