

# National Qualifications 2025: Candidate Malpractice Data

On 9 April 2026, under our statutory duty as the regulator for National Qualifications in Scotland, we published information on malpractice in the 2024–25 academic session.

Note: From 1 February 2026, Qualifications Scotland became fully operational, replacing SQA and becoming the new national awarding body. This document references SQA as it concerns delivery in the 2024–25 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.

**Falsification of SQA certificates** — The alteration or falsification of any results document, including certificates.

**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 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, and so on) 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 the award in which the malpractice was identified.

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

**De-bar** – Disqualification from future entries for a defined period of time.

## Data

Category	NQ 2025 Number of instances of malpractice	NQ 2024 Number of instances of malpractice
Breach of assessment conditions	16	*
Collusion	29	12
Falsification of SQA certificates**	*	n/a
Frivolous/Offensive content	9	6
Misconduct	14	*
Personation	*	0
Plagiarism ( <i>cases involving use of AI</i> )	69 (44)	92 (51)
Prohibited items: mobile telephones	47	40
Prohibited items: notes, and so on	23	19
<b>Totals</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>173</b>

<b>Penalty</b>	<b>NQ 2025</b> Number of penalties issued to candidates	<b>NQ 2024</b> Number of penalties issued to candidates
Warning	66	30
Warning with revision of marks	29	*
Cancellation of award	18	5
Cancellation of component	96	135
De-bar	*	*
<b>Totals</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>173</b>

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

\*\*Falsification of SQA certificates is reported as a separate category of malpractice for the first time in 2025. Previously any malpractice of this type was reported under the category of misconduct.