

Malpractice for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2019 exam series

Annual

Published: 13 December 2019

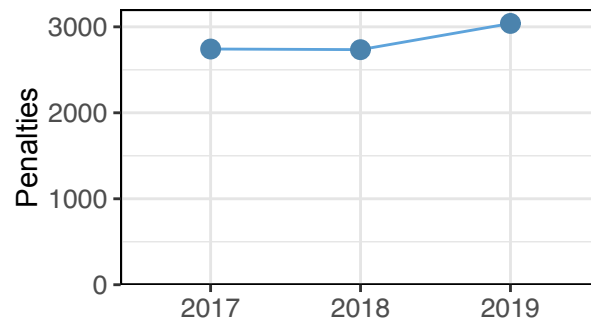
Coverage: England

Official statistics

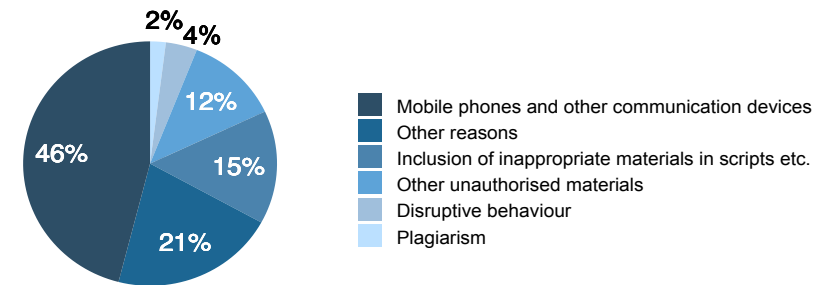
This release presents figures on penalties issued by exam boards for student, school or college staff, and school or college malpractice for GCSE, AS and A level examinations for the 2019 summer exam series in England.

Number of penalties issued to students rises slightly

3,040 penalties were issued to students in 2019, an increase of 11% from 2018 (2,735), and representing 0.02% of entries, the same proportion as last year.

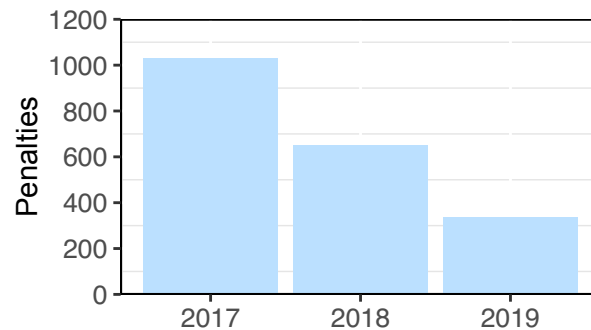


Mobile phone and other communication devices: main reason for student penalties

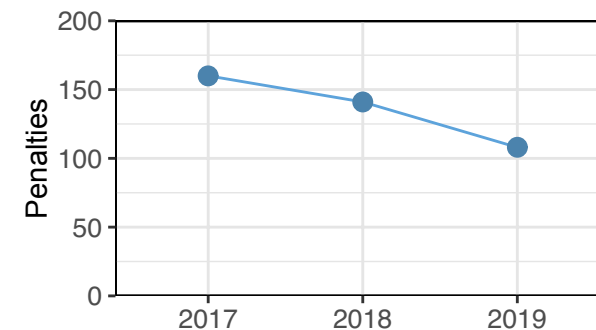


Number of penalties issued to school or college staff decreases

335 penalties were issued to staff, down from 650 in 2018. This involves a very small proportion of the total number of staff in England ([nearly 350K](#)).



Number of penalties issued to schools or colleges decreases



110 penalties were issued to schools/colleges in 2019, down from 140 in 2018, involving just over 1.5% of centres.

At a glance

Page

Student malpractice

Malpractice penalties among students have increased since 2018. Introducing mobile phones and other communication devices into the examination room remains the main reason for penalties.

3

School or college staff malpractice

Staff malpractice penalties have decreased since 2018. A very small number of teachers are involved.

5

School or college malpractice

Centre malpractice penalties have decreased since 2018. Centre malpractice affects a very small proportion of centres.

7

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Comments and feedback are welcome.

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Malpractice

In this statistical report, Ofqual presents data on malpractice for GCSE, AS, and A level exams during the summer 2019 exam series in England. The data may not reflect the full extent of malpractice because these cases relate only to instances of reported malpractice where a penalty has been applied.

A breach of the exam boards' regulations that might undermine the integrity of an assessment may constitute malpractice. It includes bringing in to the examination room unauthorised material (for example mobile phones), and failures by school or college staff to comply with exam board instructions.

We require exam boards to have procedures in place to prevent, investigate and act in relation to malpractice by students, school or college staff or others involved in providing a qualification. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) publishes [policies and guidance](#) on malpractice that set out procedures for dealing with suspected malpractice as well as definitions for the categories of malpractice listed within this release.

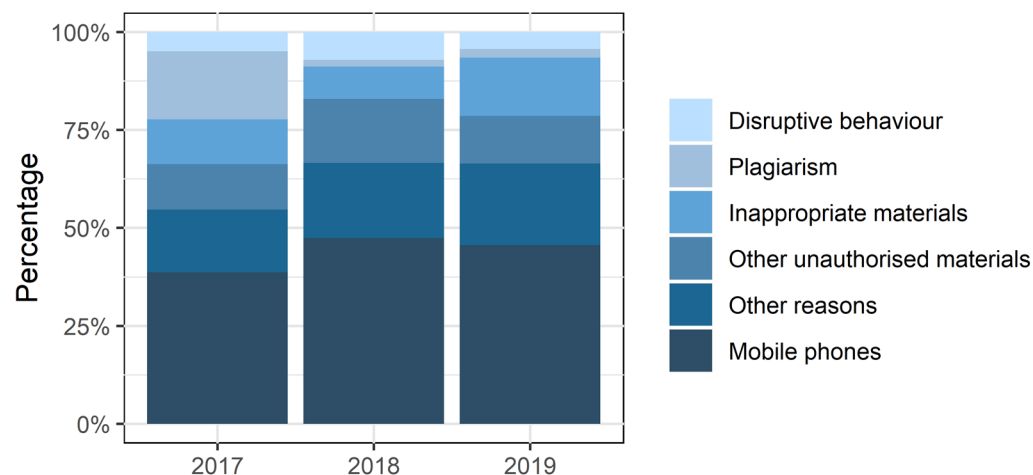
In this release, all figures are rounded to the nearest 5 to ensure confidentiality of data. Further information on this release is available in the background information as well as data tables accompanying this report, both which can be found [here](#).

Please note that the figures for summer 2018 published in this release are different from those published in the last release as some exam boards have recently submitted revised 2018 figures. This was to capture the cases that were still in progress when the data was originally reported.

Student malpractice

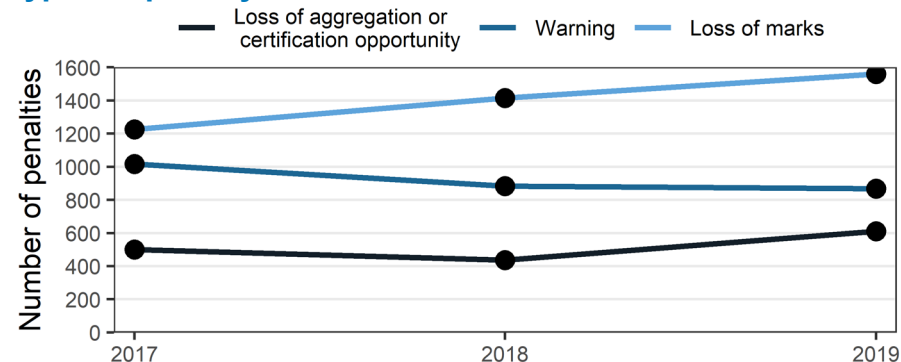
Exam boards may impose sanctions and penalties on students found to have committed malpractice. The penalties for student malpractice vary depending on the type of offence. An individual student can be penalised more than once and by more than one exam board if they commit malpractice offences when sitting more than one assessment. A student may also receive one penalty for multiple offences.

Types of student malpractice¹



The most common type of malpractice reported in 2019 was the introduction of a mobile phone or other communications device into the examination room, the same as in previous years. This category accounted for 46% of all student penalties (1,385 penalties in 2019, compared with 1,295 in 2018, an increase of 7%).

Types of penalty issued to students

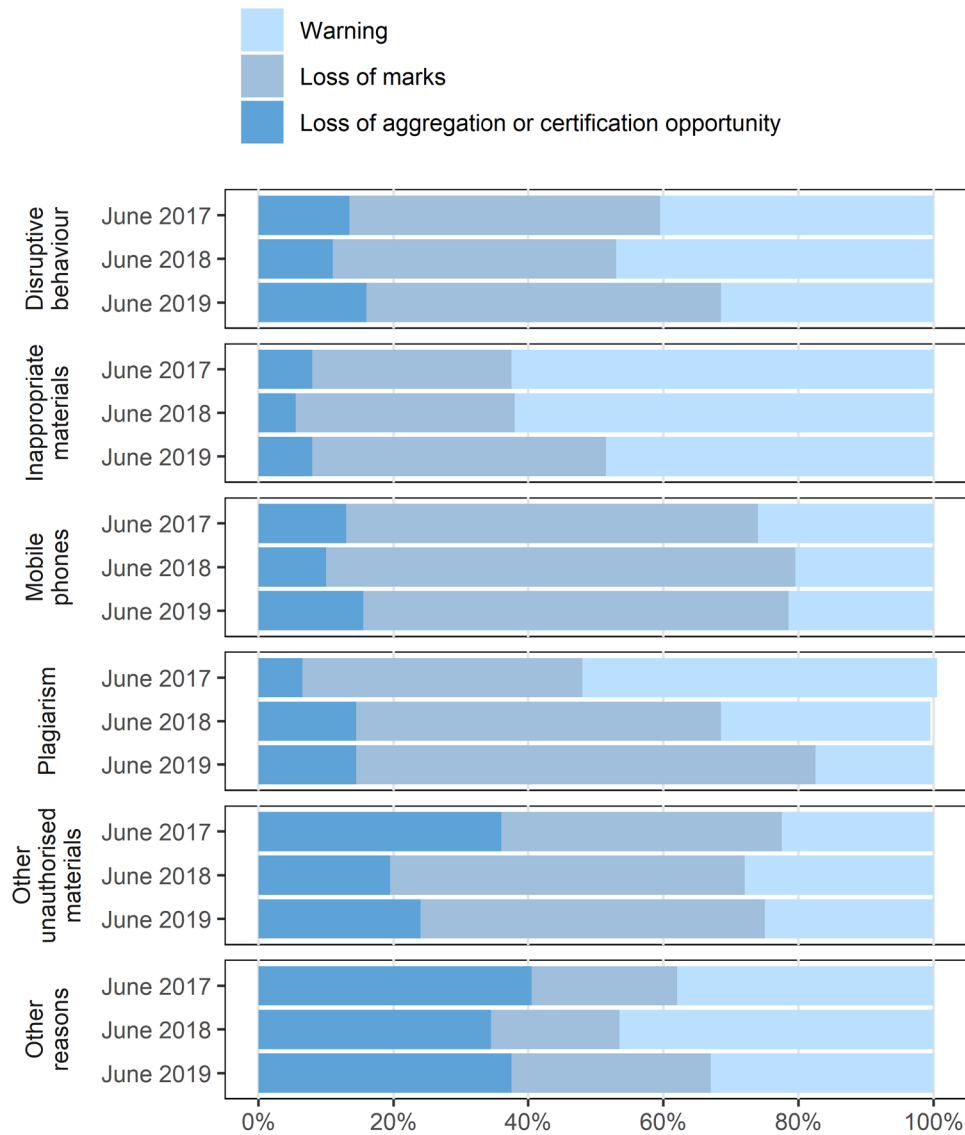


Due to an increased number of offences being committed, the total number of student penalties has increased by 11% in 2019 relative to 2018. The most common type of penalty issued in 2019 was a loss of marks, with the number of this type of penalty increasing by 10% compared with 2018. The number of warnings has gone down and the number of loss of aggregation or certification opportunity penalties has increased.

Penalty type	2018	2019	Change
Loss of marks	1,415	1,560	▲ 10%
Warning	885	870	▼ 2%
Loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	435	610	▲ 40%
Total	2,735	3,040	▲ 11%

¹ The mobile phones category also includes other communication devices. 'Inappropriate materials' refers to the inclusion of inappropriate, offensive or obscene materials in scripts, coursework or portfolios.

Types of penalty issued to students, by type of malpractice²

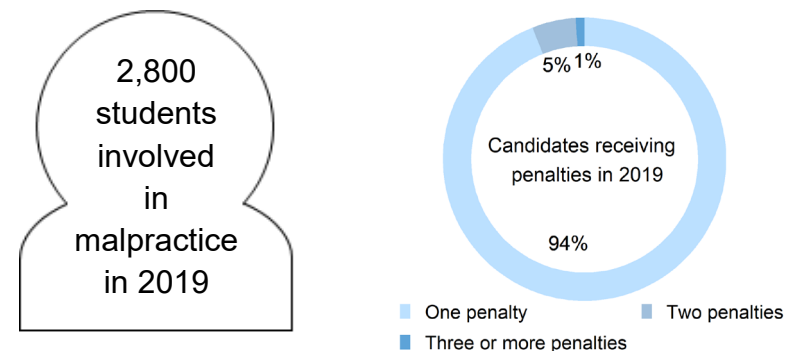


² The mobile phones category also includes other communication devices. 'Inappropriate materials' refers to the inclusion of inappropriate, offensive or obscene materials in scripts, coursework or portfolios.

Penalties for student malpractice varied depending on the type of offence. A warning was the most common type of penalty where a student was found to have included inappropriate, offensive, or obscene material in scripts, coursework, or portfolios. Students found with mobile phones or other communication devices were more likely to lose marks than any other type of penalty. For most types of malpractice, the proportion of candidates issued with warnings decreased and there was an increase in loss of marks and loss of aggregation and certification opportunity penalties. The categories presented here are broad, and could cover a range of individual circumstances.

Student penalties

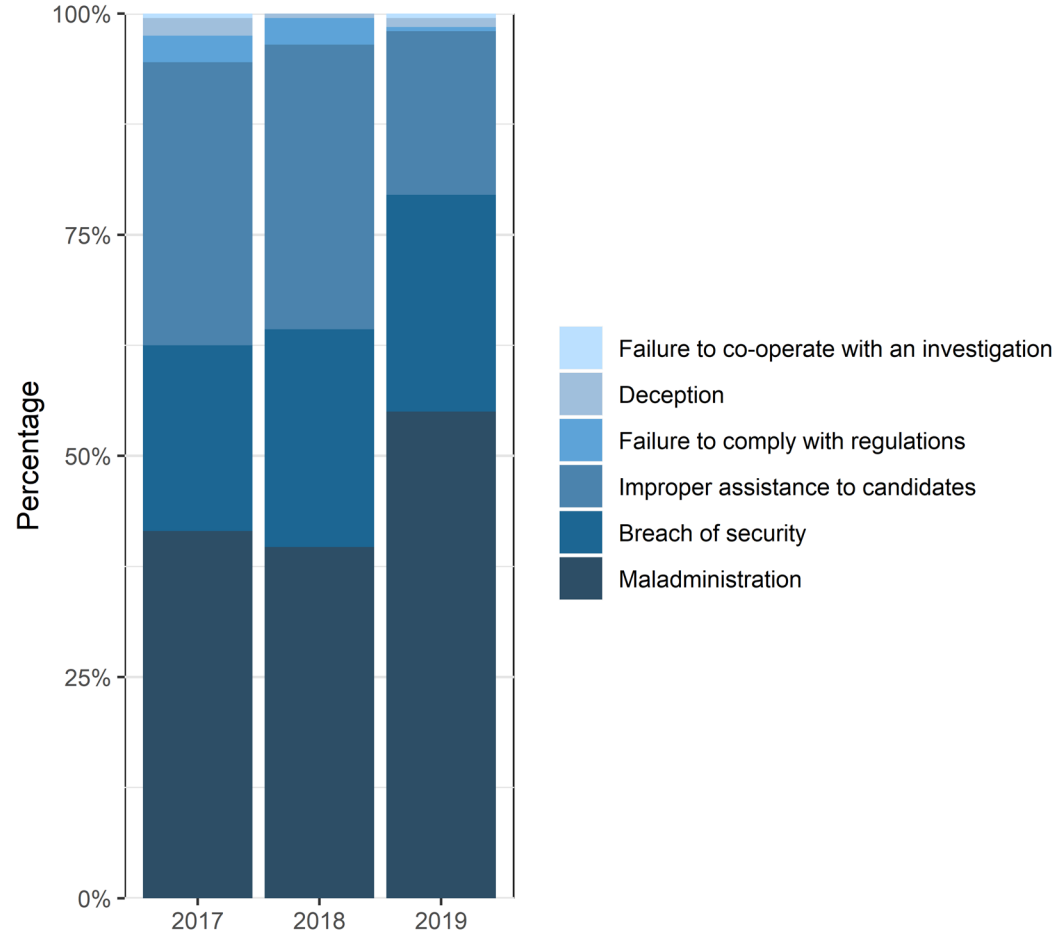
In 2019, a total of 2,800 individual students were issued with penalties for malpractice compared to 2,565 in 2018. Individual students can receive multiple penalties for multiple offences. In 2019, the majority of penalised students (94%) received one penalty, similar to 2018. There were a small number of students who committed more than one offence and received a penalty for each of these offences.



Staff malpractice

Exam boards may impose penalties for malpractice committed by an individual member of staff at a school or college, for example a teacher or an invigilator. More than one penalty can be imposed for a single offence.

Types of staff malpractice³



In 2019, 335 penalties were issued to 315 members of centre staff from 235 centres (compared to 650 penalties issued to 510 members of staff at 350 centres in 2018), a decrease of 48% in the number of penalties. Decreases in the number of penalties were seen across most categories.

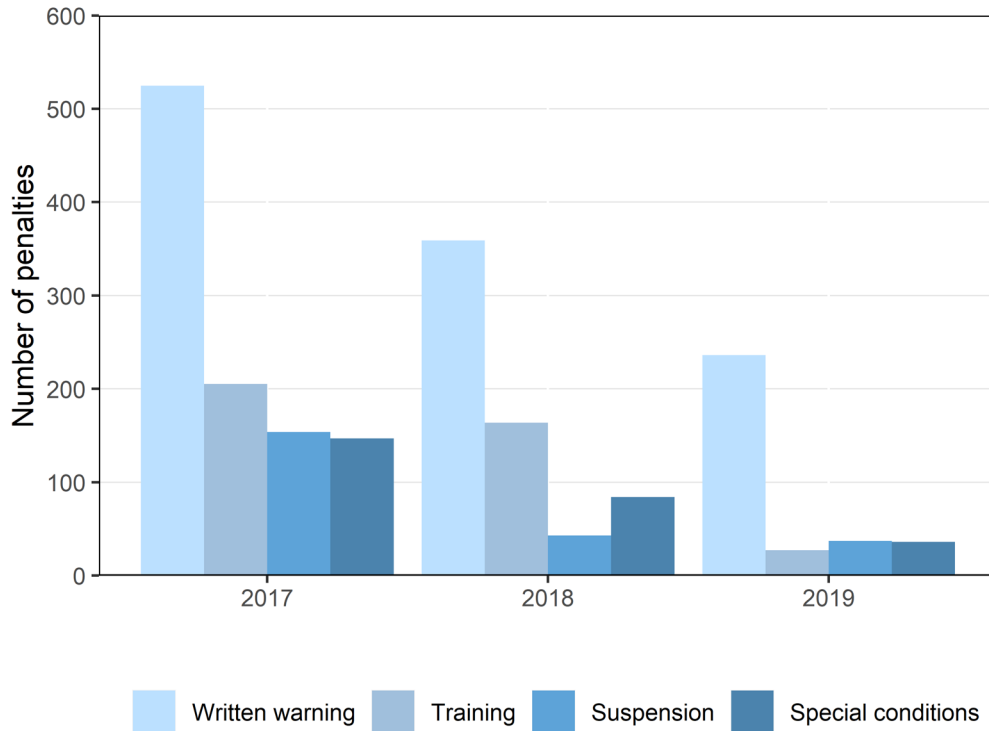
The largest proportion of penalties were for maladministration (the failure to adhere to the regulations of examinations and non-examination assessments). Breach of security is now the second most common type of offence. Instances of deception remained below 5 in 2019, the same as in 2018, and there were fewer than 5 cases of failure to co-operate with an investigation recorded this year.



³ 'Failure to comply with regulations' refers to a failure to comply with regulations for access arrangements, reasonable adjustments, and/or special consideration

Staff malpractice

Types of penalty issued to staff



All types of penalties issued to staff have gone down this year. Written warnings continue to be the most common penalty issued to staff.

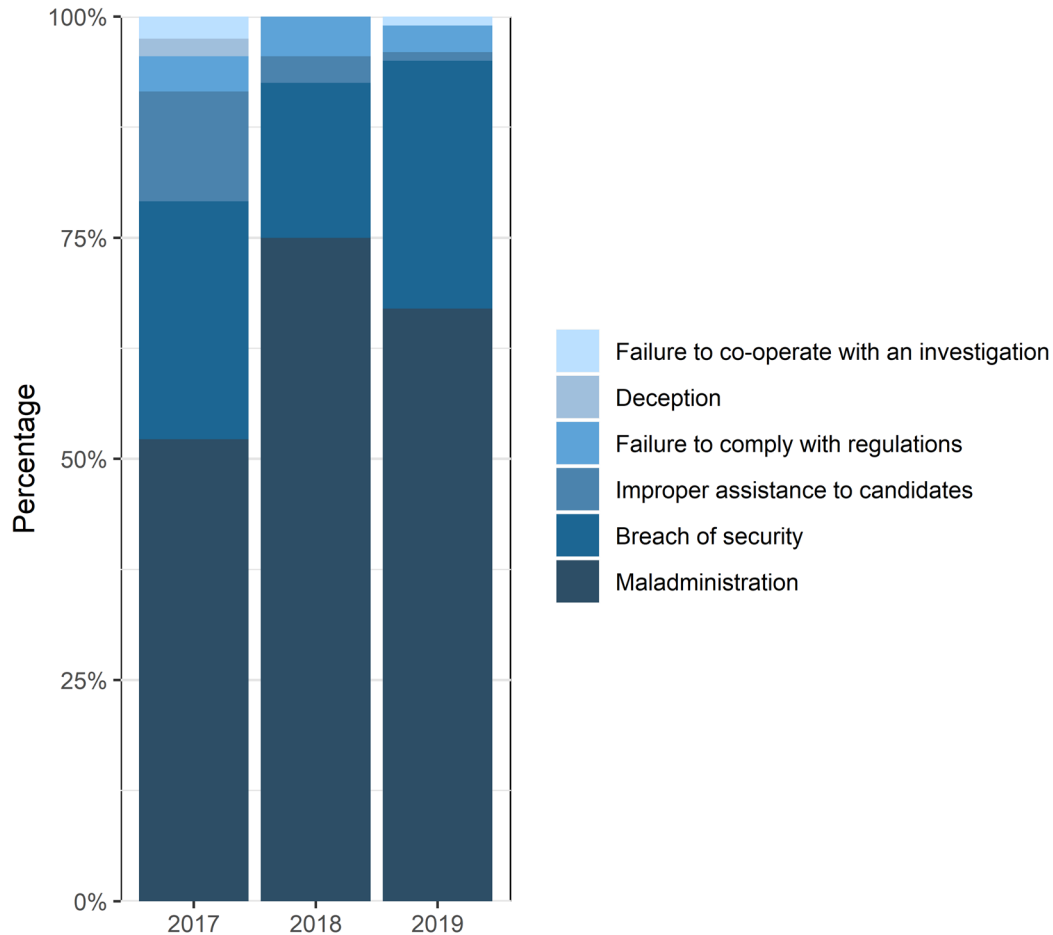
Cases of members of centre staff being required to undertake additional training have decreased by 84%, falling to 25 cases in 2019 compared to 165 in 2018.

Penalty Type	2018	2019	Change
Written warning	360	235	▼ 34%
Suspension	45	35	▼ 14%
Special conditions	85	35	▼ 57%
Training	165	25	▼ 84%
Total	650	335	▼ 48%

School or college malpractice

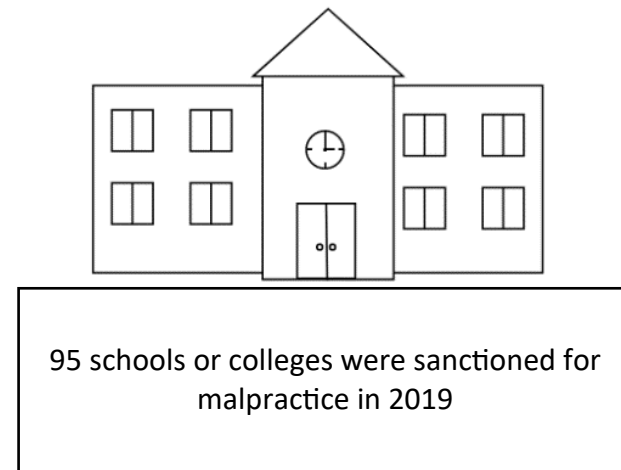
Where there is evidence that malpractice is the result of a serious management failure, an exam board may apply sanctions against a whole department or a school or college.

Types of school or college malpractice



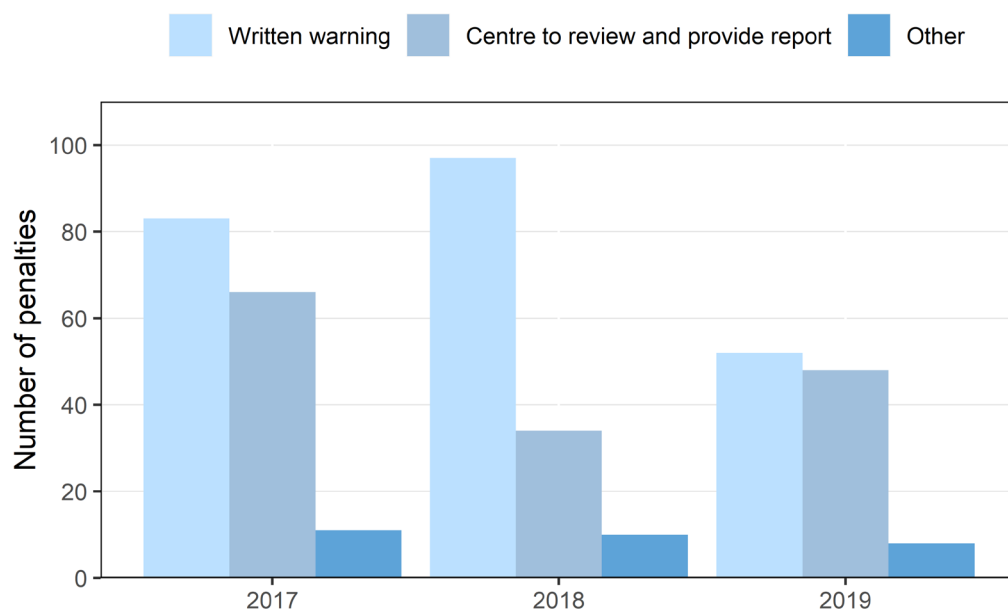
110 penalties were issued across 95 centres in 2019 (out of nearly 6000) compared to 140 penalties across 125 centres in 2018.

The largest proportion of penalties in 2019 were for maladministration, followed by breaches of security. There were fewer than 5 penalties imposed in respect of instances of improper assistance to candidates in 2019, the same as in 2018.



School or college malpractice

Types of penalties issued

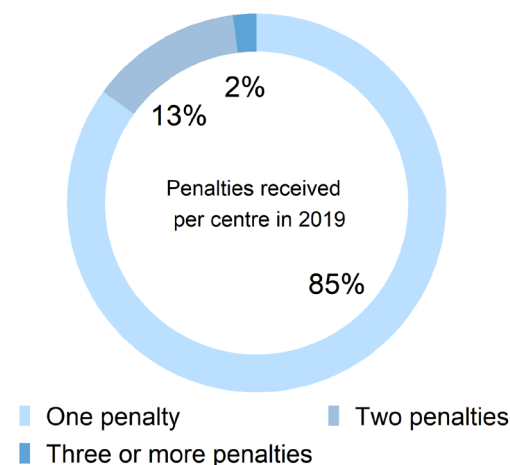


Penalty type	2018	2019	Change
Written warning	95	50	▼ 46%
Centre to review and provide report	35	50	▲ 41%
Other	10	10	▼ 20%
Total	140	110	▼ 23%

Penalties issued to centres have gone down this year overall, although the number of ‘centre to review and provide report’ penalties has risen by 41%. Written warnings continue to be the most common penalty issued to centres, despite a 46% reduction compared to 2018.

The majority of penalised centres received one or two penalties, with only a small proportion having more than two penalties.

The “other” category includes additional monitoring or inspection, training, withdrawal of centre recognition, restrictions on examination and assessment materials, and withdrawal of approval for a specific qualification.





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