

Statistics for malpractice at GCSE and A level: 2008



March 2009
Ofqual/09/4147

Contents

Introduction.....2

GCSE and A level malpractice statistics for summer 20082

 Candidate malpractice2

 Addressing malpractice.....5

 Centre malpractice5

Introduction

Ofqual works with awarding bodies to address any malpractice so that learners, parents and employers can have confidence in the exams system.

This document consolidates data received from the English unitary awarding bodies for the summer 2008 examination series. It should be read with the report *Making a difference: Promoting confidence in A level and GCSE exams in England: summer 2008*. This presents Ofqual's findings from 2008 monitoring activity, including steps taken by Ofqual to ensure the quality of the exams and further measures to be taken.

The GCSE, GCE and AEA code of practice promotes quality, consistency, accuracy and fairness in assessment and awarding. It helps maintain standards, both within and between awarding bodies and from year to year. The code lays down agreed principles, processes and practices for the awarding bodies who develop and deliver these accredited qualifications.

GCSE and A level malpractice statistics for summer 2008

Section 8 of the GCSE, GCE and AEA code of practice covers how awarding bodies should deal with alleged and suspected cases of malpractice. This includes any breaches of regulations that might undermine the integrity of an exam, from deliberate attempts by candidates to communicate with each other during an exam to inadvertent failures by centre staff to comply with awarding body instructions. Centres must report all incidents of malpractice to awarding bodies. The code of practice requires awarding bodies to investigate any cases of suspected malpractice.

Candidate malpractice

In the June 2008 exam series the overall proportion of candidates penalised for malpractice at A level and GCSE remained extremely low, at less than 0.05 per cent of the number of results, or less than one in every 1,500 results

For candidates penalised for malpractice, the following penalties were issued:

Table 1: Candidate malpractice

Number of candidates with:	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
----------------------------	-----	---------	-----

a warning	580	300	349
loss of marks (but not loss of aggregation or certification opportunity)	889	381	599
loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	278	193	257
Total number of candidate penalties	1,747	874	1,205

The penalties for candidate malpractice vary depending on the type of offence, ranging from warnings and loss of marks to disqualification from units, components or qualifications. For example, candidates who bring a mobile phone into an exams room but do not have their phone at their desk might receive a warning, whereas candidates found using a mobile phone during an exam might be disqualified from the unit or the qualification in the current exam series.

The number of penalties issued for malpractice has fallen compared to 2007 (3,826 in 2008 compared with 4,258 in 2007). One-third of candidate malpractice cases involved warnings for candidates, with no loss of marks. Almost half of the candidates penalised for malpractice lost marks for an individual question paper, and around one-fifth of the candidates penalised for malpractice lost the opportunity to aggregate marks from individual units or components or to gain a qualification certificate.

Awarding bodies provided Ofqual with information on the types of malpractice penalised at A level and GCSE for the June 2008 series:

Table 2: Number of candidates penalised by category of malpractice

Number of candidates penalised for:	AQA GCE/GCSE	Edexcel GCE/GCSE	OCR GCE/GCSE	Total
introducing unauthorised material into an exam room*	793 (824)	388 (360)	437 (436)	1,618 (1,620)
copying from other candidates, collusion and plagiarism (including misuse of ICT)	376 (576)	249 (266)	412 (459)	1,037 (1,301)
disruptive behaviour in the exam room (including use of offensive language)	251 (291)	110 (133)	115 (177)	476 (601)

including inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in exam papers or coursework	154 (81)	30 (19)	118 (82)	302 (182)
obtaining, receiving, exchanging or attempting to pass information that could be related to an exam	68 (53)	45 (77)	71 (61)	184 (191)
failing to follow awarding body supervision requirements	52 (64)	31 (21)	8 (14)	91 (99)
failing to follow instructions from invigilators, supervisors or the awarding body	20 (16)	3 (5)	27 (160)	50 (181)
other†	33 (26)	18 (46)	17 (11)	68 (83)
Total number of candidate penalties	1,747 (1,931)	874 (927)	1,205 (1,400)	3,826 (4,258)

Equivalent figures for 2007 are provided in brackets. These figures are for the number of candidate penalties by awarding bodies. An individual candidate may be penalised for more than one exam paper and by more than one awarding body.

*Notes or notes in the wrong format, study guides, materials with prohibited annotations, calculators and dictionaries where prohibited, personal stereos and mobile phones.

†Misusing exam materials, deliberate destruction of work, impersonation, theft, altering results documents or other behaviour that undermines the integrity of the exam.

In almost all categories of malpractice there were fewer incidents than in 2007. As in 2007, the most common type of malpractice was taking unauthorised material into the exams room, which again accounted for about two-fifths of the total. Taking a mobile phone or other electronic communication device into the exams room accounted for around three-quarters of unauthorised-material cases and over a third of all malpractice cases. Just over a quarter of the incidents of malpractice were for plagiarism, failure to acknowledge sources, copying from other candidates or collusion.

Addressing malpractice

Although the incidence of candidate malpractice remains low, it must be actively addressed so that learners, parents and employers can continue to have confidence in the exams system. Ofqual works with awarding bodies to make sure that centres, candidates and parents fully understand the penalties and consequences of malpractice, particularly in relation to plagiarism, copying and collusion.

Centre malpractice

Awarding bodies must investigate and, where necessary, penalise centres and centre staff involved in malpractice. Instances of malpractice include actions that are intended to give an unfair advantage to candidates in an exam or assessment, and ignorance of, or inappropriate application of the regulations.

Table 3: Number of penalties imposed on centre staff

Number of penalties imposed:	AQA GCE/GCSE	Edexcel GCE/GCSE	OCR GCE/GCSE
as a result of a breach of security	2	0	1
as a result of giving assistance to a candidate(s)	11	14	17
as a result of other reasons	4	6	5

These figures are for the number of penalties issued. More than one penalty may have been imposed for an individual case.

Awarding bodies will normally impose sanctions and penalties on centre staff found guilty of malpractice. These can include a written warning about the implications of repeating the offence, imposing special conditions on an individual's future involvement in exams and assessments, requiring specific training or mentoring as a condition of future involvement in exams, or suspending an individual from all involvement in delivering exams and assessments for a set period of time. In 2008, penalties included 31 written warnings, 7 requirements for training or mentoring, 21 suspensions from involvement in exams or assessments and 1 application of special conditions.

When malpractice is judged to be the result of a serious management failure in a department or whole centre, an awarding body may apply sanctions against the whole department or centre.

Table 4: Number of penalties imposed on centres

Number of penalties imposed:	AQA GCE/GCSE	Edexcel GCE/GCSE	OCR GCE/GCSE
As a result of a breach of security	0	0	4
As a result of giving assistance to a candidate(s)	0	16	3
As a result of other reasons	0	4	4

These figures are for the number of penalties issued. More than one penalty may have been imposed for an individual case.

Penalties and special conditions on centres may be applied individually or in combination and will depend on the circumstances and the evidence. In 2008, 18 written warnings were issued to centres, 8 centres were required to review and report on improvements in their procedures, and 5 centres were to receive extra monitoring in relation to the qualifications.

Ofqual wishes to make its publications widely accessible. Please contact us if you have any specific accessibility requirements.

First published by The Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator in 2009.

© Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2009

Ofqual is part of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). QCA is an exempt charity under Schedule 2 of the Charities Act 1993.

Reproduction, storage or translation, in any form or by any means, of this publication is prohibited without prior written permission of the publisher, unless within the terms of the Copyright Licensing Agency. Excerpts may be reproduced for the purpose of research, private study, criticism or review, or by educational institutions solely for education purposes, without permission, provided full acknowledgement is given.

Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator
Spring Place
Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UB

Telephone 0300 303 3344
Textphone 0300 303 3345
Helpline 0300 303 3346

www.ofqual.gov.uk