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Official Statistics

Malpractice in GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2024 exam series

Published 12 December 2024

Applies to England

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Introduction

This release presents figures on reported cases of malpractice associated with GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in England for the summer 2024 exam series. The report only includes cases of malpractice where a penalty was issued. Historical

data going back to summer 2022 is also presented. These figures are correct at the time of publication, however not all investigations into cases of malpractice may be concluded by the time the data is collected.

A single malpractice case may involve an individual student, member of school or college staff, or school or college, but may also involve multiple individuals from either within or across these groups. When determining whether multiple individuals were involved in a single malpractice case, exam boards may need to exercise their judgement based on the evidence provided. It is also possible for cases of staff or school or college malpractice to include both GCSE and AS and A level qualifications.

Changes in cohort size may affect the overall number of malpractice cases in each academic year. In the summer 2024 exam series there was a 4% increase in the total number of GCSE, AS and A level entries compared with the previous year. GCSE, AS and A level entries increased from 16.9 million in the summer 2023 exam series to 17.6 million in the summer 2024 exam series.

Further information, including definitions and examples of the different categories of malpractice presented within this publication, is available in the <u>Suspected</u>

<u>Malpractice Policies and Procedures document published by the Joint Council for</u>

Qualifications.

Key headlines

Malpractice in GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2024 exam series

Malpractice cases - Students

5,190 cases

with penalties issued in summer 2024

an increase from 4,900 in summer 2023

Malpractice cases - Staff

250 cases

with penalties issued in summer 2024

an increase from 230 in summer 2023

Student malpractice involving a mobile phone or other communications device



2,145 cases

a decrease from 44.5% in summer 2023

Malpractice cases - School and college

145 cases

with penalties issued in summer 2024

an increase from 55 in summer 2023

The key headlines for cases of malpractice for which a penalty was issued (proven cases of malpractice) in GCSE, AS and A level qualifications for the summer 2024 exam series were:

- 1. The number of proven cases of malpractice involving students increased compared with the previous year. There were 5,190 cases of malpractice involving students in summer 2024, up 5.9% from 4,900 cases in summer 2023. This is small when compared with the 17.6 and 16.9 million GCSE, AS and A level entries (at component level) in summer 2024 and summer 2023 respectively.
- 2. For student malpractice, 41.4% of all cases involved mobile phone and other communication device offences. This continued to be the most common offence type for student malpractice with 2,145 cases with penalties for this type of offence in summer 2024, compared with 2,180 (44.5%) in summer 2023.
- 3. The number of cases of malpractice (including maladministration) involving school or college staff increased compared with the previous year. 250 cases of malpractice included members of staff in summer 2024, up from 230 in summer 2023. Only a small proportion of the total number of staff in England (over 365,000 full time equivalent teachers and support staff in state funded secondary schools) were involved in malpractice cases.
- 4. There were 145 cases of school or college level malpractice (including

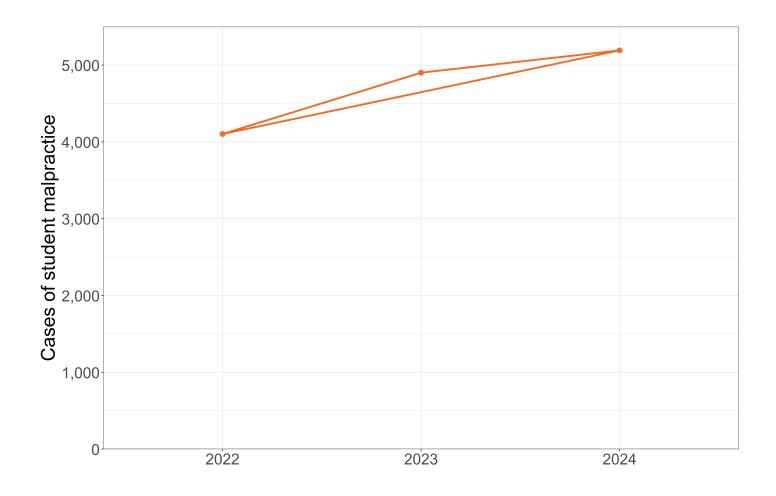
maladministration) in summer 2024, up from 55 in summer 2023. This is more in line with figures from pre-pandemic years. For more information on these years please see the <u>summer 2023 published report</u>.

Provide your feedback

We welcome your feedback on our publications. If you have any comments on this statistical release, or how to improve it to meet your needs, please complete our short survey or email our statistics team.

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 potentially be involved in multiple cases of malpractice and be penalised 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.

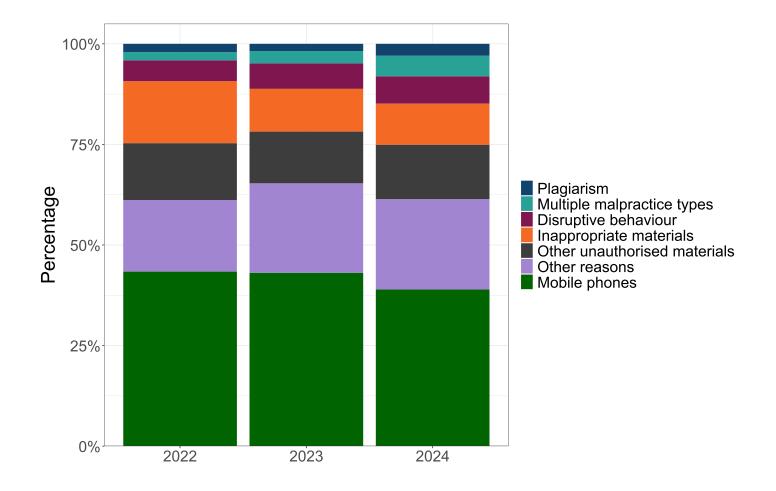


Exam series	2022	2023	2024
Cases of student malpractice	4,105	4,900	5,190

In summer 2024, 5,190 cases of malpractice included students, up from 4,900 in summer 2023. This is small in relation to the 17.6 and 16.9 million GCSE, AS and A level total entries (at component level) in summer 2024 and summer 2023 respectively. Note that it is not appropriate to calculate proportions here as some malpractice cases might include multiple students and/or components.

In summer 2024, 5,010 individual students were involved in malpractice cases, compared with 4,670 individual students in summer 2023.

Types of student malpractice (proportion of cases per offence type)



Type of student malpractice	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Plagiarism	2.1%	1.8%	2.9%
Multiple malpractice types	2.0%	3.1%	5.1%
Disruptive behaviour	5.2%	6.3%	6.8%
Inappropriate materials	15.4%	10.6%	10.2%
Other unauthorised materials	14.1%	12.8%	13.5%
Other reasons	17.8%	22.2%	22.5%
Mobile phones	43.4%	43.1%	38.9%

The most common type of malpractice reported in summer 2024 was the introduction of a mobile phone or other communications device into the examination room, the same as in summer 2023. This category appeared in 41.4% of all cases of student malpractice in summer 2024 (2,145 cases), compared with 44.5% of all cases in summer 2023 (2,180 cases). These figures include cases where multiple offence types took place and therefore differ from the values reported in the table showing the types of student malpractice (percentage of cases per offence type), where cases involving multiple malpractice types are categorised separately.

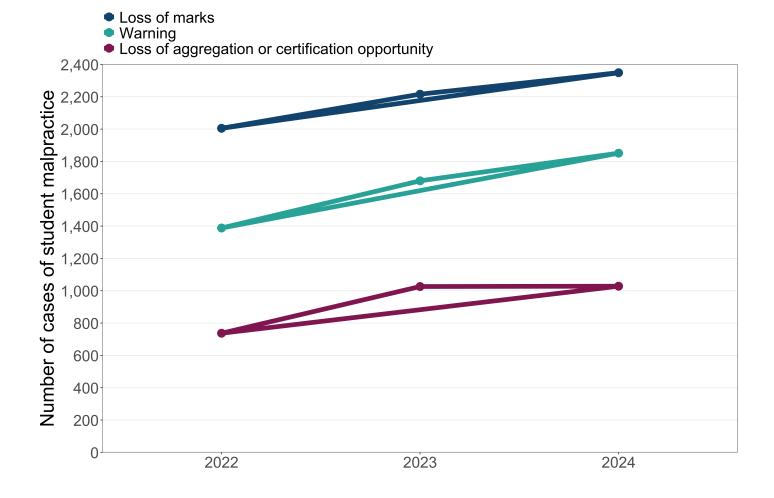
Note: The 'mobile phones' category also includes other communication devices such as smartwatches. 'Inappropriate materials' refers to the inclusion of inappropriate, offensive or obscene materials in scripts, coursework or portfolios. The 'other unauthorised materials' category includes non-smart watches, which were prohibited from being brought into the examination room from September 2021.

'Other reasons' include being in possession of confidential material in advance of the examination, copying from another candidate, misuse of or attempted misuse of examination material and resources, as well as other offences.

The 'plagiarism' category includes plagiarism including and excluding the misuse of artificial intelligence (AI).

In summer 2024, the reporting of plagiarism offences was for the first time split into those offences including the misuse of AI and those offences not including the misuse of AI. Plagiarism involving the misuse of AI accounted for 55.4% of all student plagiarism cases in summer 2024 (85 cases) and 1.7% of all student malpractice cases.

Types of penalty issued to students (number of cases per penalty type)



Penalty type	Number of cases in 2022	Number of cases in 2023	Number of cases in 2024
Loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	735	1,025	1,030
Loss of marks	2,005	2,215	2,350
Warning	1,390	1,680	1,850
Total	4,130	4,920	5,230

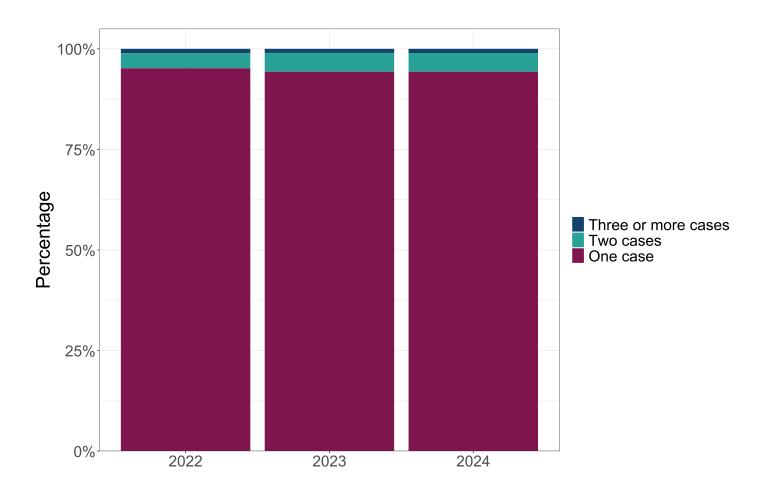
The most common type of penalty issued to students in summer 2024 was a loss of marks, with the number of cases resulting in this type of penalty being issued increasing to 2,350 from 2,215 in summer 2023.

Note: As an individual malpractice case may result in multiple different types of penalties these totals may exceed the total number of distinct malpractice cases.

Number of malpractice cases per student

Individual students can be involved in multiple malpractice cases. In summer 2024, nearly all students who were involved in malpractice (94.3%) were involved in only one case, the same as summer 2023 (94.3%). There was a small number of students who were involved in more than one case of malpractice.

Note: figures in this section only include students who had a known identifier, which is necessary to identify unique students within and across cases. Instances where the student identifier was not known (fewer than 5 in summer 2024 and fewer than 5 in summer 2023) are removed from the analysis.

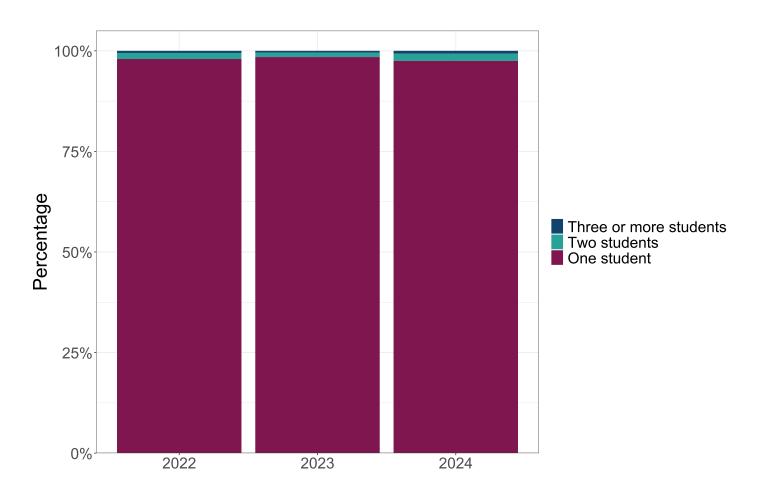


Number of cases	Percentage of students in 2022	Percentage of students in 2023	Percentage of students in 2024
One case	95.2%	94.3%	94.3%
Two cases	3.7%	4.7%	4.7%
Three or more cases	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%

Number of students per malpractice case

Similarly, a single malpractice case can involve multiple students. In summer 2024, nearly all cases of student malpractice (97.5%) involved only one student, similar to summer 2023 (98.4%). There were a small number of cases which involved more than one student.

Note: figures in this section only include students who had a known identifier, which is necessary to identify unique students within and across cases. Instances where the student identifier was not known (fewer than 5 in summer 2024 and fewer than 5 in summer 2023) are removed from the analysis.



Number of students	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
One student	98.0%	98.4%	97.5%

Two students	1.5%	1.1%	1.8%
Three or more students	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%

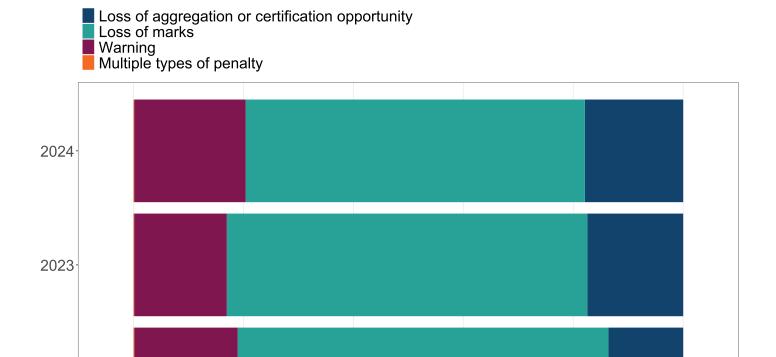
Types of penalty issued to students, by type of malpractice

Note: Penalties for cases of student malpractice vary depending on the type of offence. The categories presented here are broad and could cover a range of specific sanctions and transgressions. The precise penalty applied depends on the circumstances of the specific case.

The 'multiple types of penalty' category represents cases which resulted in more than one penalty type being applied. Should a type of penalty only occur in cases that resulted in multiple different types of penalties being applied, that type will be counted in the 'multiple types of penalty' category rather than individually listed in the tables and charts presented in the report. A full breakdown of penalty types, including those aggregated into the 'multiple penalty' category, is available in the data tables accompanying this release.

Sections are only included below for offence types that had 20 or more cases in 2024.

Mobile phones



Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	13.6%	17.4%	17.9%
Loss of marks	67.5%	65.6%	61.7%
Warning	18.8%	16.8%	20.3%
Multiple types of penalty	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%

40%

60%

80%

100%

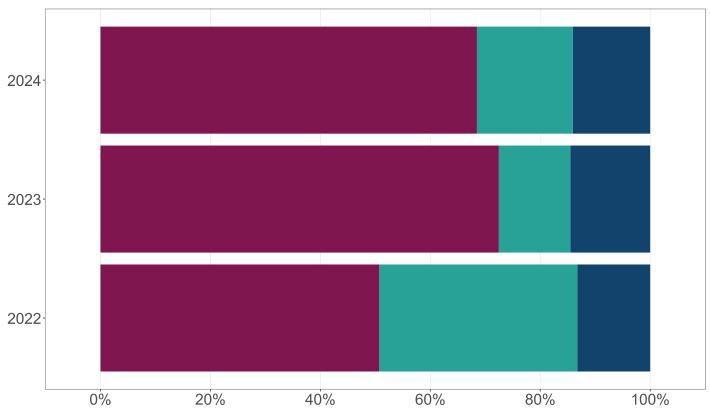
Inappropriate materials

0%

20%

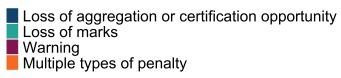
2022

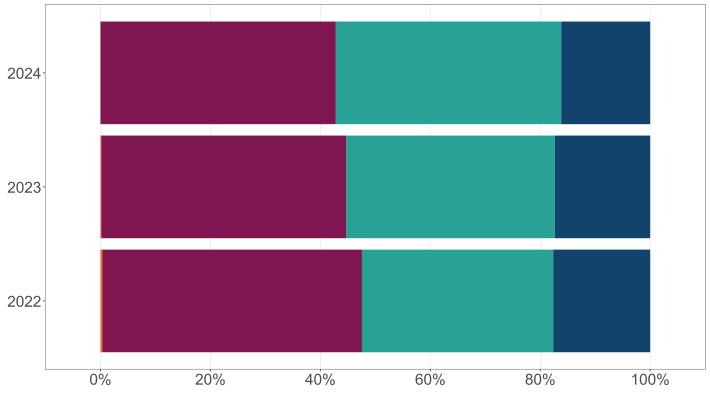




Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	13.3%	14.5%	14.1%
Loss of marks	36.0%	13.0%	17.4%
Warning	50.7%	72.5%	68.5%

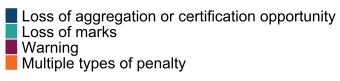
Other unauthorised materials

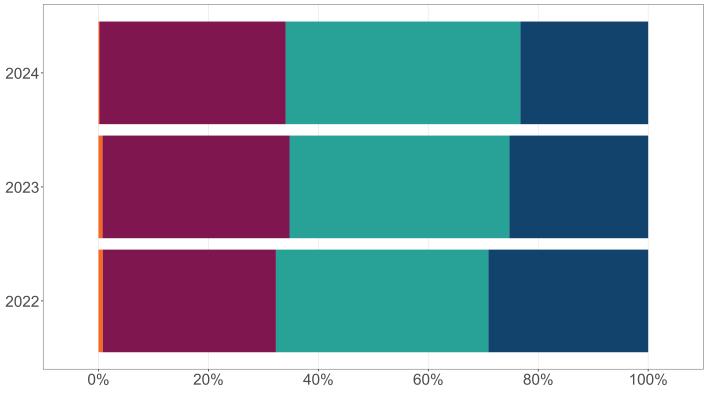




Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	17.6%	17.4%	16.2%
Loss of marks	34.8%	37.9%	41.0%
Warning	47.2%	44.5%	42.8%
Multiple types of penalty	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%

Disruptive behaviour





Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	29.1%	25.2%	23.3%
Loss of marks	38.6%	40.0%	42.7%
Warning	31.5%	34.0%	33.8%
Multiple types of penalty	0.8%	0.8%	0.2%

Plagiarism



Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	7.0%	19.6%	12.7%
Loss of marks	59.3%	48.9%	46.5%
Warning	32.6%	30.4%	37.6%
Multiple types of penalty	1.2%	1.1%	3.2%

40%

60%

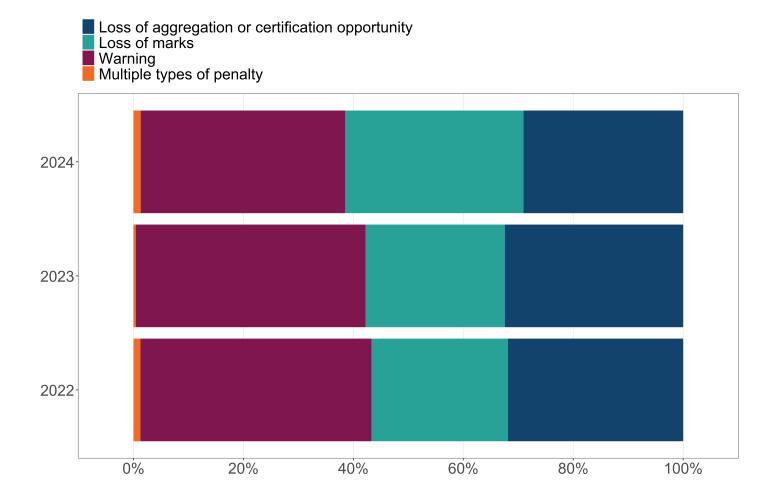
80%

100%

20%

Other reasons

0%

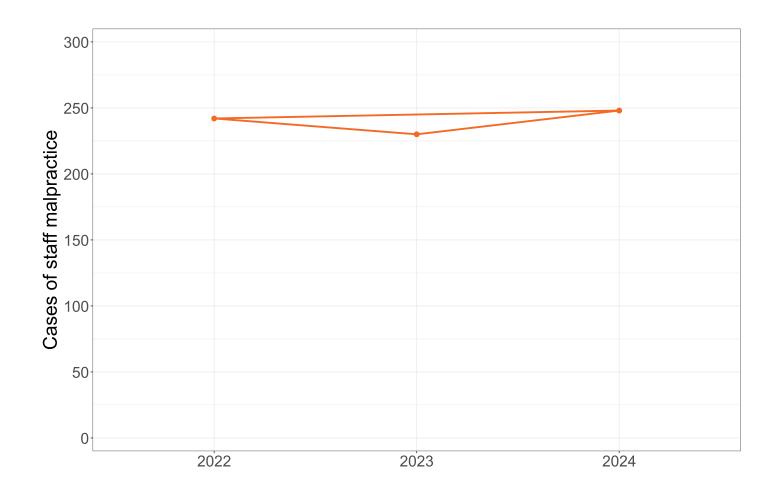


Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	31.9%	32.5%	29.1%
Loss of marks	24.8%	25.3%	32.4%
Warning	42.0%	41.8%	37.2%
Multiple types of penalty	1.3%	0.4%	1.3%

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. The term 'malpractice' here includes both 'maladministration', which generally constitutes mistakes or poor process where there has been no intention to do any harm, and

'malpractice' in its narrower sense, which generally involves some form of intent. An individual member of staff can potentially be involved in multiple cases of malpractice, and a single malpractice case may involve more than one staff member.

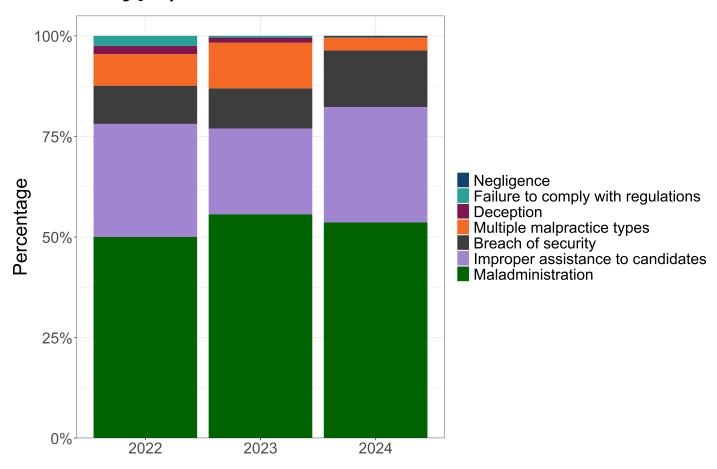


Exam series	2022	2023	2024
Cases of staff malpractice	240	230	250

In summer 2024, 250 cases of malpractice involved members of staff, up from 230 in summer 2023.

In summer 2024, 335 individual members of staff were involved in malpractice cases, compared with 305 individual members of staff in summer 2023. Only a small proportion of the total number of staff in England (over 365,000 full time equivalent teachers and support staff in state funded secondary schools) were involved in malpractice cases.

Types of staff malpractice (proportion of cases per offence type)

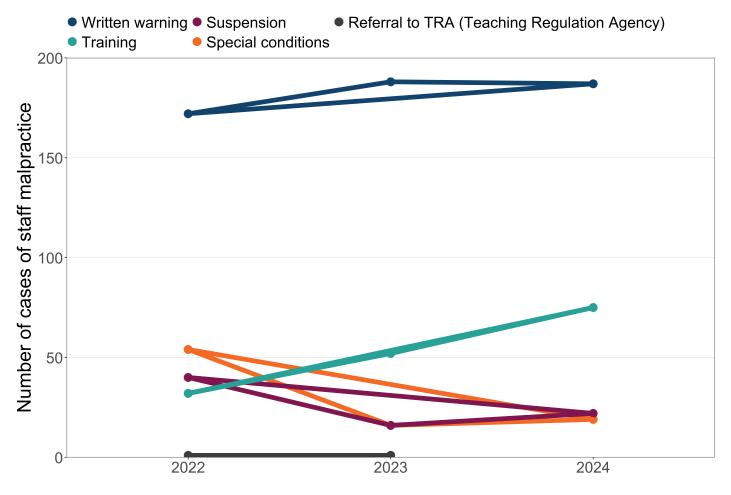


Type of staff malpractice	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Negligence	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Multiple malpractice types	7.9%	11.3%	3.2%
Deception	2.1%	1.3%	0.0%
Failure to comply with regulations	2.5%	0.4%	0.0%
Breach of security	9.5%	10.0%	14.1%
Improper assistance to candidates	28.1%	21.3%	28.6%
Maladministration	50.0%	55.7%	53.6%

The most common type of staff malpractice for which a penalty was applied in summer 2024 was maladministration (the failure to adhere to the regulations of examinations and non-examination assessments), the same as in summer 2023. This category appeared in 56.9% of all cases of staff malpractice (140 cases in summer 2024, compared with 155 in summer 2023), including cases where multiple offence types took place.

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

Types of penalty issued to staff (number of cases per penalty type)



Penalty type	Number of cases in 2022	Number of cases in 2023	Number of cases in 2024	
Referral to TRA (Teaching	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	0	

Regulation Agency)

Special conditions	55	15	20	
Suspension	40	15	20	
Training	30	50	75	
Written warning	170	190	185	
Total	300	275	305	

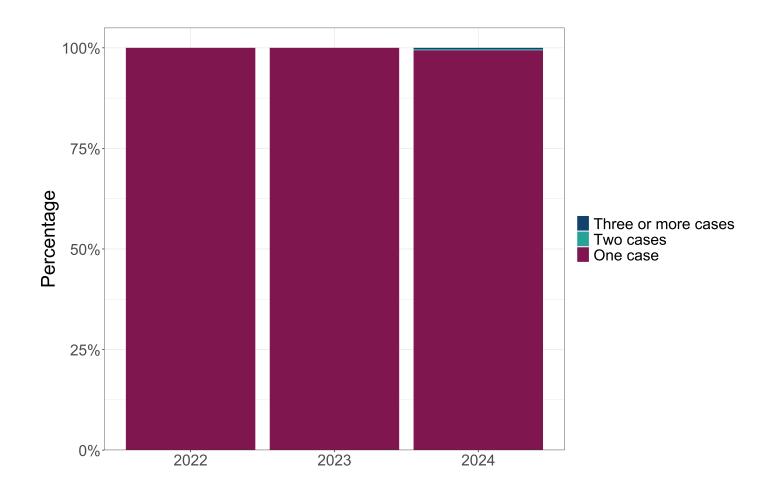
The most common type of penalty issued to staff in summer 2024 was a written warning, with the number of cases resulting in this type of penalty being issued decreasing to 185 from 190 in summer 2023.

Note: As an individual malpractice case may result in multiple different types of penalties these totals may exceed the total number of distinct malpractice cases.

Number of malpractice cases per member of staff

Individual members of school and college staff can be involved in multiple malpractice cases. In summer 2024, the majority of staff members involved in malpractice (99.4%) were involved in only one case, compared with 100% in summer 2023.

Note: figures in this section only include members of staff that had a known identifier, which is necessary to identify unique staff members within and across cases. Instances where the staff identifier was not known (none in summer 2024 and 10 in summer 2023) are removed from the analysis.

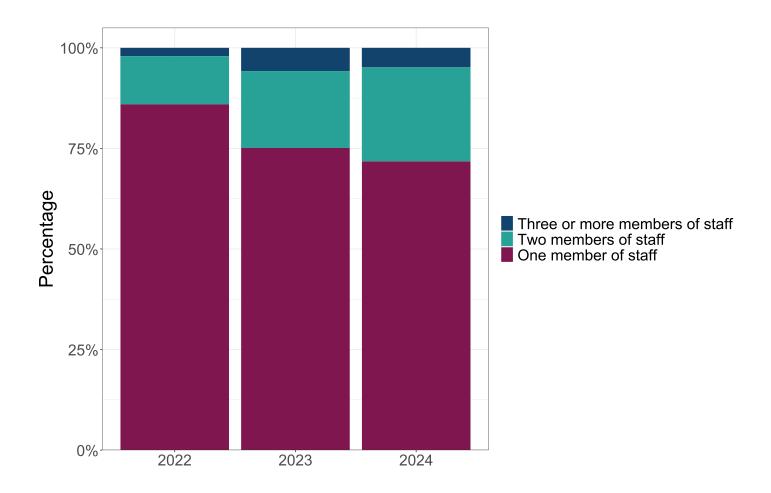


Number of cases	Percentage of staff members in 2022	Percentage of staff members in 2023	Percentage of staff members in 2024
One case	100.0%	100.0%	99.4%
Two	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Three or more cases	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%

Number of members of staff per malpractice case

Similarly, a single malpractice case can involve multiple staff members. In summer 2024, the majority of cases of staff malpractice (71.8%) involved only one staff member, down from 75.1% in summer 2023.

Note: figures in this section only include members of staff that had a known identifier, which is necessary to identify unique staff members within and across cases. Instances where the staff identifier was not known (none in summer 2024 and 10 in summer 2023) are removed from the analysis.



Number of staff members	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
One member of staff	86.0%	75.1%	71.8%
Two members of staff	12.0%	19.1%	23.4%
Three or more members of staff	2.1%	5.8%	4.8%

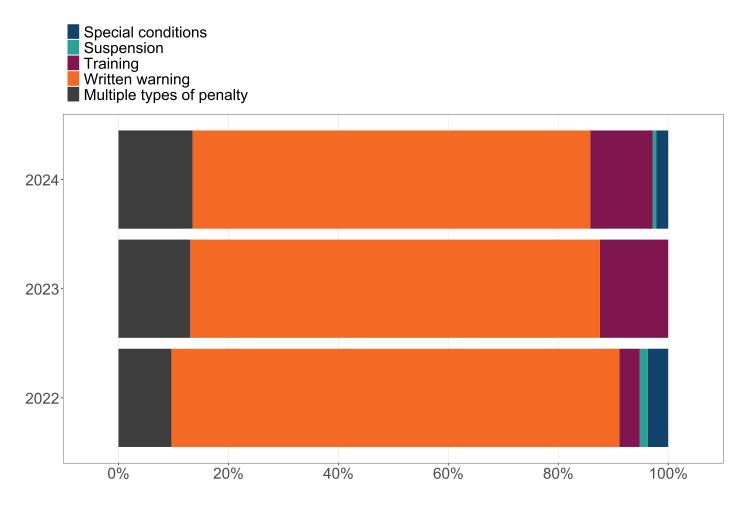
Types of penalty issued to members of centre staff,

by type of malpractice

Note: The 'multiple types of penalty' category represents cases which resulted in more than one penalty type being applied. Should a type of penalty only occur in cases that resulted in multiple different types of penalties being applied, that type will be counted in the 'multiple types of penalty' category rather than individually listed in the tables and charts presented in the report. A full breakdown of penalty types, including those aggregated into the 'multiple penalty' category, is available in the data tables accompanying this release.

Sections are only included below for offence types that had 20 or more cases in 2024.

Maladministration

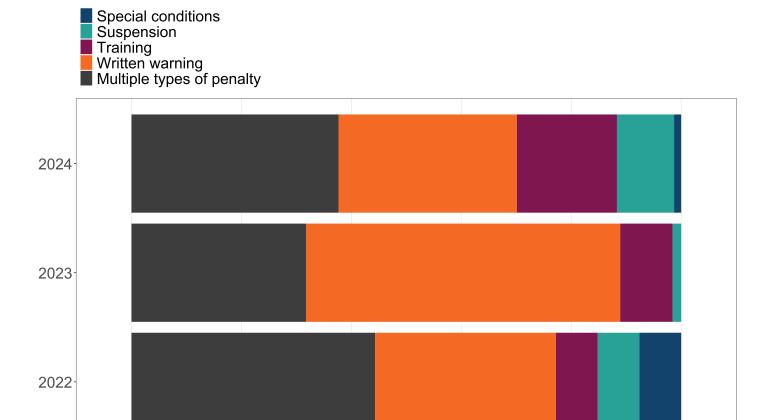


Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Special conditions	3.7%	0.0%	2.1%

Suspension	1.5%	0.0%	0.7%
Training	3.7%	12.4%	11.3%
Written warning	81.5%	74.5%	72.3%
Multiple types of penalty	9.6%	13.1%	13.5%

Improper assistance to candidates

0%



Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Special conditions	7.6%	0.0%	1.3%
Suspension	7.6%	1.6%	10.4%
Training	7.6%	9.5%	18.2%

60%

80%

100%

40%

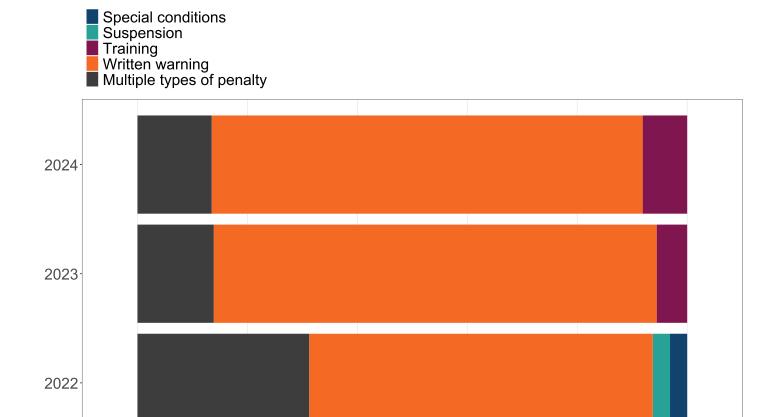
20%

Written warning	32.9%	57.1%	32.5%
Multiple types of penalty	44.3%	31.7%	37.7%

Breach of security

0%

20%



Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Special conditions	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Suspension	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Training	0.0%	5.6%	8.1%
Written warning	62.5%	80.6%	78.4%
Multiple types of penalty	31.2%	13.9%	13.5%

40%

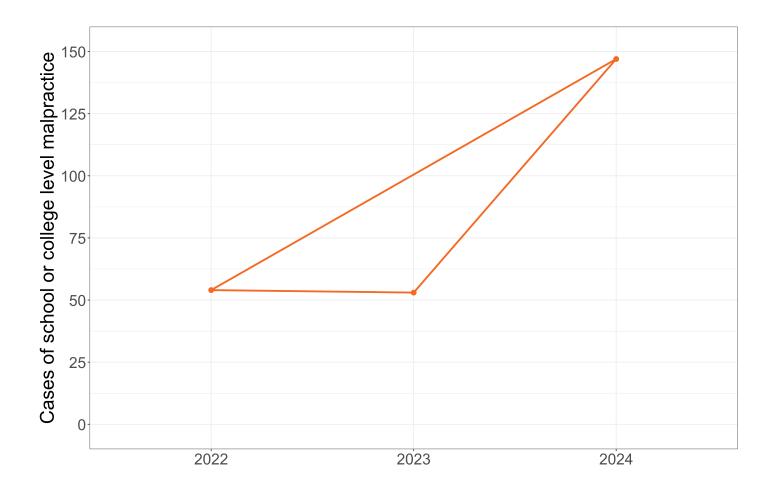
60%

80%

100%

School or college malpractice

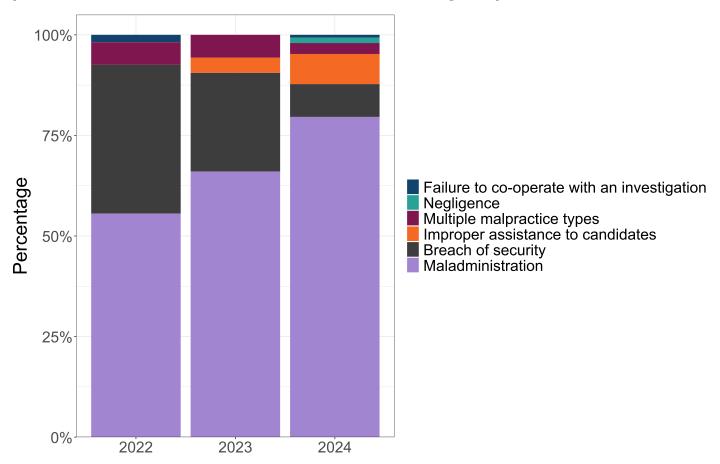
Where there is evidence that malpractice is the result of a serious management failure, an exam board may apply sanctions against a whole department or a school or college. The term 'malpractice' here includes both 'maladministration', which generally constitutes mistakes or poor process where there has been no intention to do any harm, and 'malpractice' in its narrower sense, which generally involves some form of intent.



Exam series	2022	2023	2024
Cases of school or college level malpractice	55	55	145

There were 145 cases of school or college level malpractice in summer 2024, up from 55 in summer 2023. This is more in line with figures reported in pre-pandemic years (in summer 2018 and 2019). For information on malpractice in these years

Types of school or college level malpractice (proportion of cases per offence type)

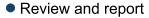


Type of school or college malpractice	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Failure to co-operate with an investigation	1.9%	0.0%	0.7%
Negligence	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%
Multiple malpractice types	5.6%	5.7%	2.7%
Improper assistance to candidates	0.0%	3.8%	7.5%

Breach of security	37.0%	24.5%	8.2%
Maladministration	55.6%	66.0%	79.6%

The most common type of school or college level malpractice in summer 2024 was maladministration (the failure to adhere to the regulations of examinations and non-examination assessments), the same as summer 2023. This category appeared in 120 (82.3%) of all cases of school or college level malpractice in summer 2024, compared with 40 (71.7%) of all cases of school or college level malpractice in summer 2023, including cases where multiple offence types took place.

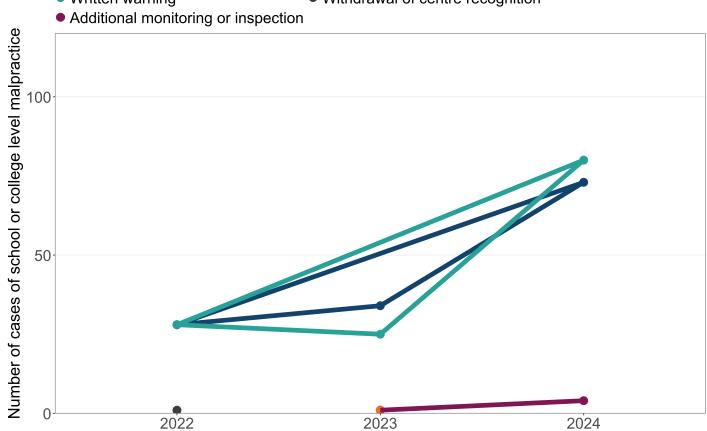
Types of penalty issued to schools or colleges (number of cases per penalty type)



Restrictions on examination and assessment materials

Written warning

Withdrawal of centre recognition



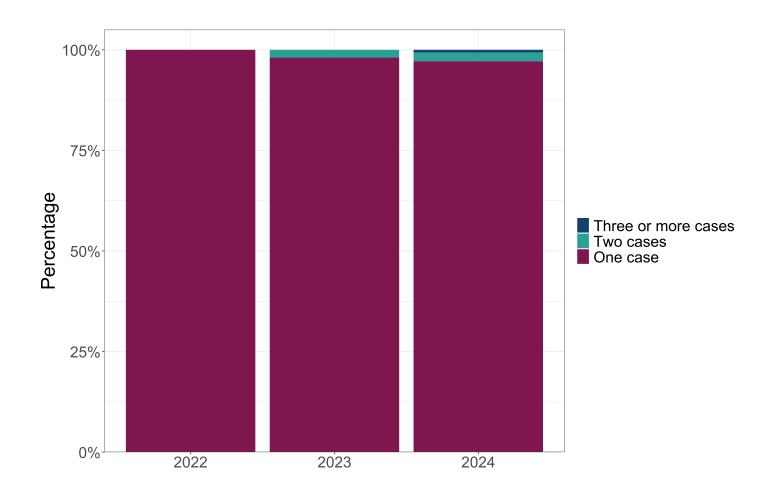
Penalty type	2022	2023	2024
Review and report	30	35	75

Withdrawal of centre recognition	Fewer than 5	0	0
Written warning	30	25	80
Additional monitoring or inspection	0	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5
Restrictions on examination and assessment materials	0	Fewer than 5	0
Total	55	60	155

The most common type of penalty issued to schools and colleges in summer 2024 was a written warning, with the number of cases resulting in this type of penalty being issued increasing to 80 from 25 in summer 2023.

Number of malpractice cases per school or college

Individual schools or colleges can be involved in multiple malpractice cases. In summer 2024, the majority of schools or colleges involved in school or college level malpractice (97.2%) were involved in only one case of school or college malpractice, similar to summer 2023 (98.1%).



Number of cases	Percentage of schools or colleges in 2022	Percentage of schools or colleges in 2023	Percentage of schools or colleges in 2024
One case	100.0%	98.1%	97.2%
Two cases	0.0%	1.9%	2.1%
Three or more cases	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%

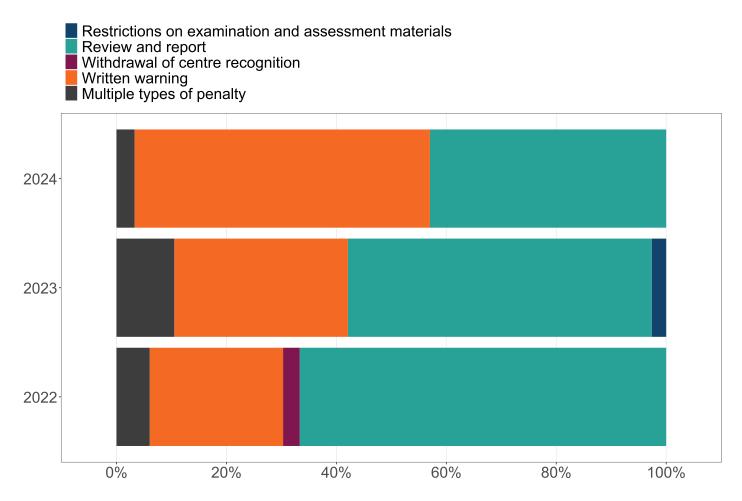
Types of penalty issued to schools and colleges, by type of malpractice

The 'multiple types of penalty' category represents cases which resulted in more

than one penalty type being applied. Should a type of penalty only occur in cases that resulted in multiple different types of penalties being applied, that type will be counted in the 'multiple types of penalty' category rather than individually listed in the tables and charts presented in the report. A full breakdown of penalty types, including those aggregated into the 'multiple penalty' category, is available in the data tables accompanying this release.

Sections are only included below for offence types that had 20 or more cases in 2024.

Maladministration

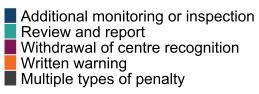


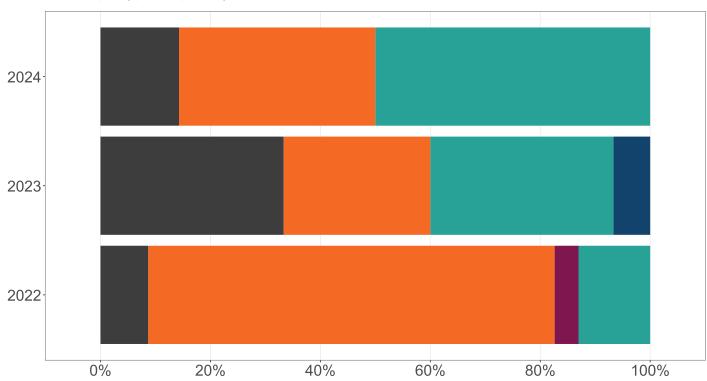
Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Restrictions on examination and assessment materials	0.0%	2.6%	0.0%
Review and report	66.7%	55.3%	43.0%
Withdrawal of centre	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%

recognition

Written warning	24.2%	31.6%	53.7%
Multiple types of penalty	6.1%	10.5%	3.3%

Breach of security





Penalty type	Percentage of cases in 2022	Percentage of cases in 2023	Percentage of cases in 2024
Additional monitoring or inspection	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%
Review and report	13.0%	33.3%	50.0%
Withdrawal of centre recognition	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Written warning	73.9%	26.7%	35.7%

Contextual information

In this statistical release, Ofqual presents data on malpractice in GCSE, AS, and A level assessments during the summer 2024 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.

Any breach of the exam boards' regulations that might undermine the integrity of an assessment may constitute malpractice. This includes bringing into the exam room unauthorised material or mobile phones, and failures by school or college staff to comply with exam board instructions.

Ofqual requires 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 the assessment of qualifications. 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 <u>background information</u> and <u>data tables</u> accompanying this report.

Head of profession: Ben Cuff

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