

Learning from malpractice in other qualifications

Based on findings shared by Ofqual in their *Statistical Release of Malpractice for GCSE and A level: Summer 2014 exam series*.



This blog post is relevant to all AOs, not just those who use paper or electronic tests and exams, but also those who use assignments and practical tests

The trend is malpractice cases are rising on all fronts. How Awarding Organisation's (AO's) deal with malpractice, other than having a policy in place, does vary. However, the practicalities and issues irrespective of sector are common to all.

Penalties are on the increase too, including penalties for learners, which depending upon on the type of offence may be:

- warnings;
- loss of marks; and
- disqualification from units, components or qualifications.

For example when learners bring a mobile phone into an exam room but do not have their phone at their desk they might receive a warning, whereas those found using a mobile phone during an exam might be disqualified from the unit or the qualification.

Categories of malpractice committed by learners most commonly found:

- the introduction of unauthorised material into the exam room. Often a mobile phone or other electronic communications device. This was the most common type of malpractice reported;
- plagiarism, failure to acknowledge sources, copying from other candidates or collusion in exams, assignments and coursework. The second most common type of malpractice;
- the inclusion of inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in the exam paper or coursework; and
- disruptive behaviour in the exam room.

Malpractice committed by individuals/staff at a school or college: usually by a teacher or an invigilator has steadily increased. Penalties were issued usually as a result of staff giving inappropriate assistance to learners.

Malpractice penalties for schools and colleges, are on the rise mainly due to:

- a breach of security;
- giving assistance to learners; or
- other reasons, such as not following the requirements of an exam, including opening question papers early, allowing learners to sit an exam at the wrong time, or a lack of appropriate invigilation during an exam.

Combatting malpractice

Both JCQ (the Joint Council for Qualifications) and Ofqual have been actively looking at raising awareness of potential for malpractice.

JCQ have produced posters for schools and colleges to display in exam rooms, warning of the penalty for candidates caught in possession of a mobile phone or other electronic communications device.

AOs can be alerted by monitoring and auditing activity, including:

- review of assessment data looking at unexpected changes in results trends, comparing individual returns over time from the same centre;
- challenging any unexpected results;
- having an appropriate data auditing framework in place, auditing of centre's assessment and information collection, collation and delivery processes using tools from questionnaires to on-site process audits.

If you found this useful

Heather Venis of Awarding First provides a range of guidance. Heather works with AOs to support qualification development, compliance and other projects.

If you would like to talk about combatting malpractice call Heather on 0789 479 6262, or email Heather@awardingfirst.co.uk