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# **Statistical bulletin**

## **Malpractice in GCSE and GCE: June 2009 examination series**

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## Introduction

This Statistical Bulletin published on behalf of the regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland presents data on malpractice in GCSE and GCE examinations during the June 2009 examination series. These qualifications are offered by five awarding organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (Northern Ireland) (CCEA)
- Edexcel
- Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR), and
- WJEC.

In the June 2009 examination series over 1 million GCE AS qualification awards and over 840,000 GCE A level qualification awards were made. Nearly 5.5 million GCSE qualification awards were made during the June 2009 series. Over 16 million GCSE and GCE scripts were marked by the awarding organisations.

## Malpractice

The regulators in England (Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator; Ofqual), Wales (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills; DCELLS) and Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; CCEA) produce the *GCSE, GCE and AEA code of practice* to promote quality, consistency, accuracy and fairness in assessment and awarding. It helps maintain standards, both within and between awarding organisations and from year to year. The code lays down agreed principles, processes and practices for the awarding organisations that develop and deliver these qualifications.

Section 8 of the code of practice requires awarding organisations to have procedures in place for dealing with malpractice on the part of candidates, centre staff or others involved in providing a qualification. 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 organisation instructions.

The code requires that awarding organisations investigate any instances of alleged or suspected malpractice in either the internally or externally assessed components and must take such action, with respect to the candidates and centres concerned, as

is necessary to maintain the integrity of the examination. Centres must report all incidents of malpractice to the relevant awarding organisations and cooperate with subsequent investigations. Each case of malpractice, whether reported by the centre or identified by the awarding body, is considered and judged on an individual basis in the light of all information available and the outcome should be commensurate with the gravity of the malpractice as determined by the awarding organisation.

## Candidate malpractice

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.

Awarding organisations issued 4,415 penalties to candidates in response to malpractice during the June 2009 examinations series.

**Table 1: Penalties issued to candidates for malpractice during the June 2009 examination series by type of penalty**

	Year	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	Total
a warning	2009	701	464	355	85	11	1,616
	2008	580	300	349	100	11	1,340
loss of marks	2009	957	406	548	200	44	2,155
	2008	889	381	599	168	25	2,062
loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	2009	228	154	210	33	19	644
	2008	278	193	257	15	11	754
Total number of penalties issued	2009	1,886	1,024	1,113	318	74	4,415
	2008	1,747	874	1,205	283	47	4,156
% of examinations to which a penalty was applied	2009	0.03%	0.03%	0.03%	0.02%	0.02%	0.03%
	2008	0.02%	0.02%	0.03%	0.02%	0.01%	0.02%

These figures are for the number of penalties issued by awarding organisations. An individual candidate may be penalised more than once and by more than one awarding organisation.

The number of penalties issued for candidate malpractice increased by 6.2 per cent as compared to the June 2008 examination series. All but one awarding organisation recorded an increase in the number of penalties issued to candidates.

Over a third of malpractice cases resulted in a warning to the candidate concerned and nearly half of overall cases resulted in candidates having marks deducted from an assessment. The remaining cases resulted in candidates losing the opportunity to aggregate marks from individual units or components or to gain a qualification certificate.

Instances of candidate malpractice in the June 2009 examination series remained extremely rare across all five awarding organisations. The 4,415 penalties issued were equivalent to 0.03 per cent of the total examinations sat by candidates.

**Table 2: Number of penalties issued to candidates during the June 2009 examination series by category of malpractice**

	Year	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	Total
<b>Introducing unauthorised material into an exam room*</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1,897</b>
	2008	793	388	437	126	14	1,758
<b>copying from other candidates, collusion, plagiarism, (including misuse of ICT)</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1,084</b>
	2008	376	254	412	86	22	1,150
<b>disruptive behaviour in the exam room (including use of offensive language)</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>539</b>
	2008	251	110	115	28	10	514

including inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in exam papers or coursework	2009	159	48	132	10	0	349
	2008	154	30	118	16	0	318
obtaining, receiving, exchanging or attempting to pass information that could be related to an exam	2009	77	60	51	32	0	220
	2008	68	45	71	18	1	203
failing to follow awarding organisation supervision requirements	2009	50	42	14	2	0	108
	2008	52	31	8	8	0	99
failing to follow instructions from invigilators, supervisors or the awarding organisation	2009	72	9	48	1	2	132
	2008	20	3	27	1	0	51
other†	2009	30	36	13	6	1	86
	2008	33	13	17	0	0	63
Total number of penalties issued	2009	1,886	1,024	1,113	318	74	4,415
	2008	1,747	874	1,205	283	47	4,156

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

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

For most categories of malpractice there was an increase in penalties compared to June 2008. As in 2008, the most common type of malpractice was introduction of unauthorised material into the examinations room which in the majority of cases was a mobile phone or other electronic communications device. The second most common type of malpractice, as in 2008, was plagiarism, failure to acknowledge sources, copying from other candidates or collusion.

## **Centre staff malpractice**

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

Awarding organisations 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 examinations and assessments, requiring specific training or mentoring as a condition of future involvement in examinations, or suspending an individual from all involvement in delivering examinations and assessments for a set period of time.

For the June 2009 examination series there were 88 penalties issued to centre staff. These figures are for the number of penalties issued and more than one penalty may have been imposed for an individual case. The majority of these penalties were issued as a result of centre staff giving inappropriate assistance to candidates. The penalties issued to centre staff included 27 written warnings, 14 requirements for training or mentoring of staff, 17 staff suspensions from involvement in exams or assessments and 30 cases of special conditions to an individual's future involvement in examinations and assessments.

**Table 3: Centre staff - number of penalties imposed for malpractice during the June 2009 examinations series**

	Year	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	Total
<b>as a result of a breach of security</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>
	2008	2	0	1	0	0	3
<b>as a result of giving assistance to a candidate(s)</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>58</b>
	2008	11	14	17	0	3	45
<b>as a result of other reasons</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>
	2008	4	6	5	5	0	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>88</b>
	2008	17	20	23	5	3	68

**Number of penalties imposed on centres**

When malpractice is judged to be the result of a serious management failure, an awarding organisation may apply sanctions against the whole department or centre. These figures are for the number of penalties issued and 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, depending on the circumstances and the evidence.

**Table 4: Centres - number of penalties imposed for malpractice during the June 2009 examination series**

	YEAR	AQA	EDEXCEL	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	TOTAL
as a result of a breach of security	2009	1	0	1	0	0	2
	2008	2	0	4	0	0	6
as a result of giving assistance to a candidate(s)	2009	3	12	5	0	0	20
	2008	1	16	3	0	0	20
as a result of other reasons	2009	9	35	2	0	2	48
	2008	7	4	4	6	5	26
Total	2009	13	47	8	0	2	70
	2008	10	20	11	6	5	52

There were very few instances of penalties being issued as a result of centres breaching the security of confidential examination materials. The majority of penalties issued were for 'other reasons'. In most cases, other reasons involved centres not adhering to the requirements of an examination, such as opening question papers early without authorisation, allowing candidates to sit an examination at an incorrect time and the lack of appropriate invigilation during an examination.

The penalties that an awarding organisation can issue as a result of centre malpractice range from a written warning about the implications of repeating the offence to withdrawing approval for a centre to offer a specific or all qualifications. For the June 2009 examination series there were 70 penalties issued to centres. Of these, 44 were written warnings, 16 required the Head of a centre to review and provide a report on an incident of malpractice, seven imposed an increased level of inspection and monitoring of a centre, and three penalties led to a restriction on centres' access to examination materials.

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