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Rewarding Learning

Statistical Bulletin

Malpractice in GCSE and GCE: June 2012 Exam Series

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Summary

Awarding organisations have procedures in place for dealing with malpractice on the part of candidates, school/college staff or others involved in providing a qualification. Malpractice includes any breach of the 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 school/college staff to comply with awarding organisation instructions.

Penalties issued for candidate malpractice in the June 2012 exam series remained limited to a very small proportion of the total assessments taken. The 2,550 penalties issued represent 0.02 per cent of the total number of exams sat by candidates, and a decrease in penalties of 32 per cent from summer 2011. This is in the context of 5 per cent fewer exams being taken when compared with summer 2011.

The most common type of malpractice was the introduction of unauthorised material into exam rooms (1,325 penalties issued) representing 52 per cent of all penalties.

In most cases, this was a mobile phone or other electronic communications device (967 penalties issued) representing 38 per cent of all penalties. This compares with 1,251 penalties for a mobile phone or other electronic communications device in 2011 representing a 23 per cent reduction.

For the June 2012 exam series, 60 penalties were issued to school/college staff (see Table 4) and 130 to schools/colleges (see Table 6).

Introduction

This statistical bulletin, published on behalf of the regulators for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, presents data on malpractice in GCSE and GCE exams during the June 2012 exam series. These qualifications are offered by six awarding organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

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

At the time of publication there are sometimes cases of malpractice still under investigation. This was the case in 2011 and so some figures have been revised to capture this information.

Malpractice

The qualifications covered by this report are regulated by Ofqual, the Welsh Government and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). Each regulator publishes conditions that set out the requirements that the awarding organisations it regulates have to meet. These conditions state that 'An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any malpractice or maladministration in the development, delivery and award of qualifications which it makes available or proposes to make available.' The conditions require all awarding organisations to investigate and manage the effect of any malpractice where they have established that malpractice or maladministration has occurred. They must take steps to prevent reoccurrence and take action against those responsible that is proportionate to the gravity and scope of the occurrence.

In addition, the *GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice (2011)*¹ aims to promote quality, consistency, accuracy and fairness in assessment and awarding. This code of practice 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, school/college staff or others involved in providing a qualification. Malpractice includes any breach of the 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 school/college 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 take such action, with respect to the candidates and schools/colleges concerned, as is deemed necessary to maintain the integrity of the exam. Schools/colleges must report all incidents of malpractice to the relevant awarding organisations and co-operate with subsequent investigations. Each case of malpractice, whether reported by the school/college or identified by the awarding organisation, 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.

¹ www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/93-codes-of-practice?download=680%3Agcse-gce-principal-learning-and-project-code-of-practice-2011

Summer 2012 exams series

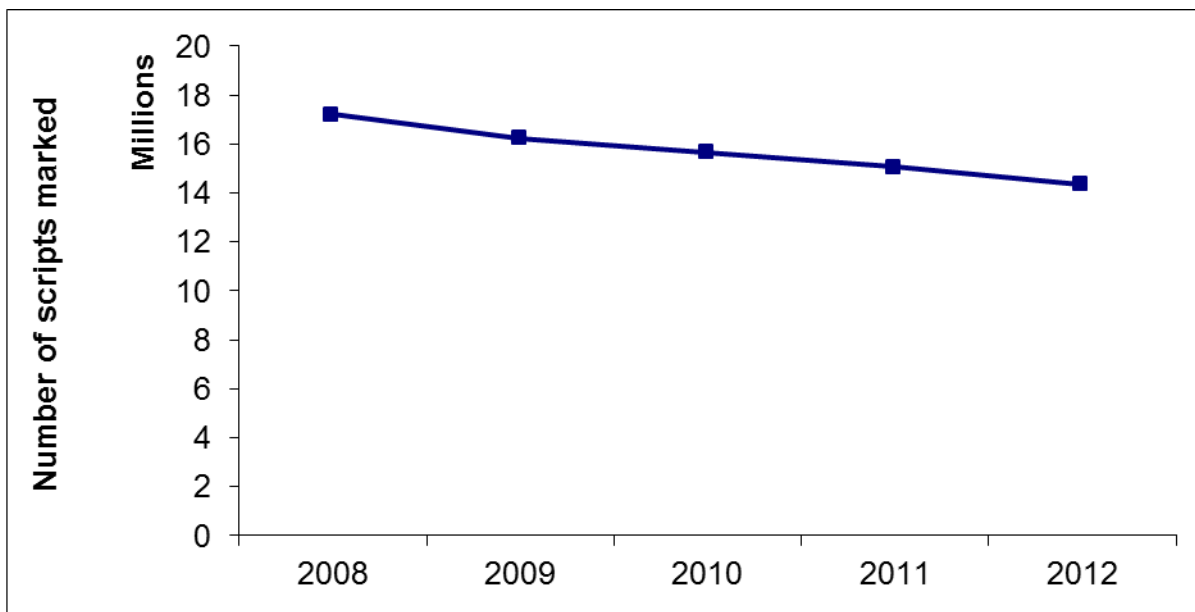
Awards made

In the June 2012 exam series, more than 2.4 million GCE A level (AS and A level) awards were made. More than 5.9 million GCSE qualifications were awarded in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during the June 2012 series.

Scripts

In the June 2012 exam series, 14.4 million scripts were marked (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Figure 1 covers GCE, Applied GCE, GCSE, Applied GCSE, GCSE Short Course and overseas entries. There has been a consistent decrease in the number of scripts in the summer series. The change in structure of qualifications, such as the move from six to four units in A levels and the unitisation of GCSEs, is likely to have contributed to the reductions seen over the past five years.

Figure 1: Total scripts marked for GCSE and A level, summer exam series 2008–12



Penalties for malpractice may relate to specific assessments/scripts or may be applied at qualification level.

Candidate malpractice

The penalties for candidate malpractice vary depending on the type of offence, and include warnings, loss of marks and disqualification from units, components or qualifications. For example, candidates who bring a mobile phone into an exam 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 that exam series.

Awarding organisations issued 2,550 penalties to candidates in response to malpractice during the June 2012 exams series, a decrease of 32 per cent from the previous year. This is in the context of 5 per cent fewer exams being taken when compared with summer 2011 (see Table 2).

An individual candidate may be penalised more than once and by more than one awarding organisation.

Penalties for candidate malpractice in the June 2012 exam series remained extremely rare across all six awarding organisations. The 2,550 penalties issued represent 0.02 per cent of the total scripts marked (see Figure 2 and Table 2).

Figure 2: Penalties issued as a percentage of total scripts for summer exam series, 2008–12

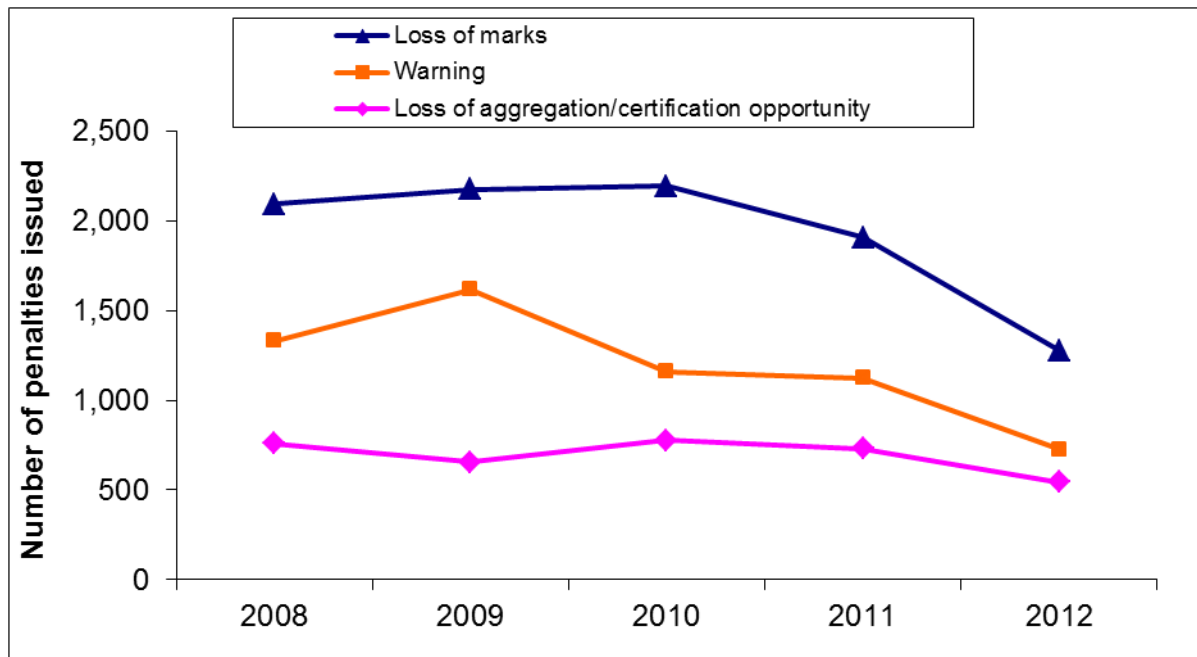


Type of penalty

The penalties issued in June 2012 comprised 728 warnings (29 per cent of penalties), 1,279 loss of marks (50 per cent of penalties), and 543 loss of aggregation or certification opportunities (21 per cent of penalties), (see Table 2 and Figure 3).

Compared with the previous year there were fewer warnings (a decrease of 35 per cent). The number of lost aggregation or certification opportunities decreased by 26 per cent, and the number of cases of reduced marks decreased by 33 per cent.

Figure 3: Number of penalties issued to candidates for malpractice, 2008–12



Category of malpractice

Most categories of malpractice had a reduction in the number of related penalties issued for the June 2012 series, when compared with the previous year. As in 2011, the most common type of malpractice penalised was the introduction of unauthorised material into the exam room (1,325 penalties issued, representing 52 per cent of all penalties). This category decreased by 23 per cent compared with 2011.

In the majority of cases the unauthorised material was a mobile phone or other electronic communications device (967 penalties, representing 73 per cent of the 1,325 penalties issued for unauthorised material). This has been steadily decreasing over the last three years, with a 30 per cent decrease from 2010.

England, Wales & Northern Ireland

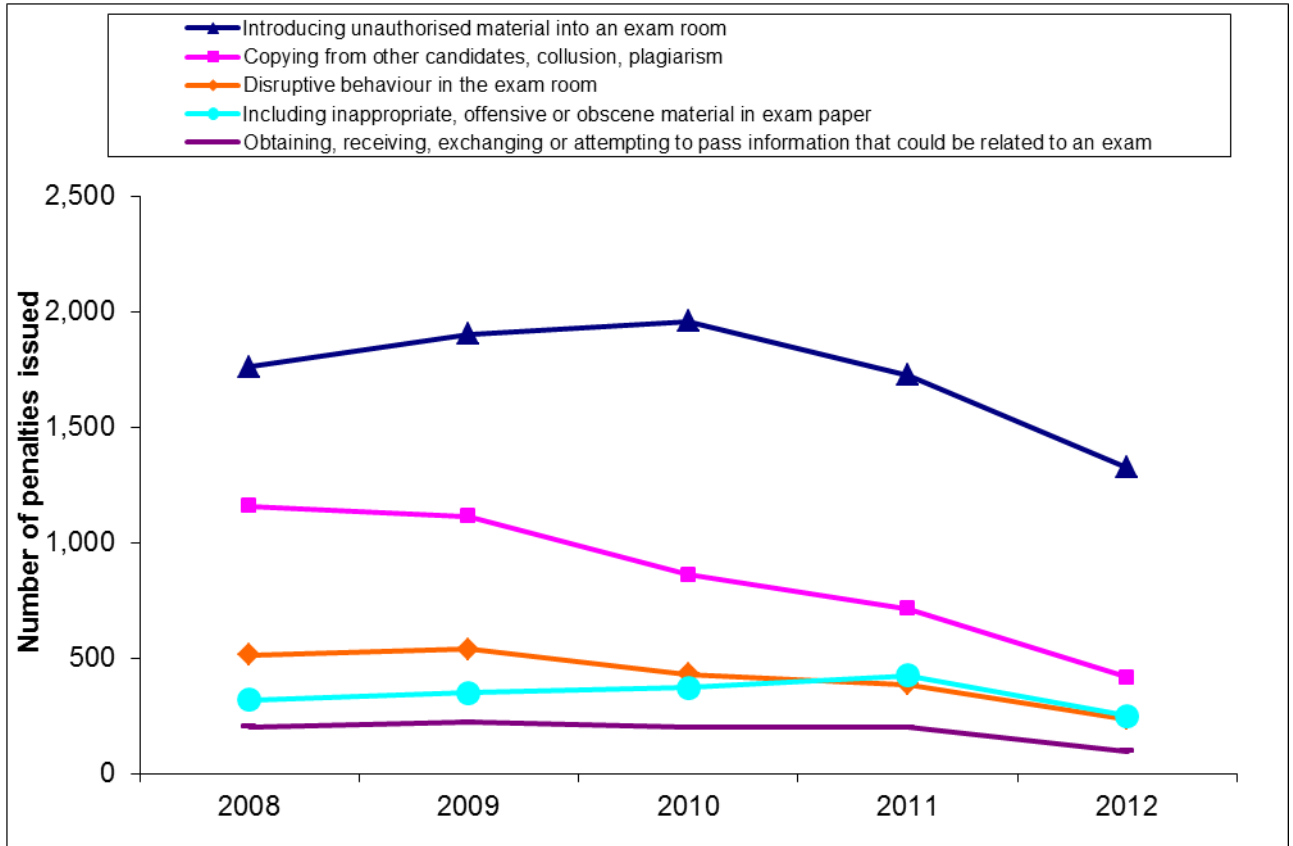
	Year	Number of penalties issued						Total
		AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	
Mobile phone or	2010	648	302	267	138	22	1	1,377
other electronic	2011	570	286	214	161	20	0	1,251
device	2012	415	256	172	116	8	0	967

1. '-' indicates data not available. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011

The second most common type of malpractice penalised, as in 2011, was for plagiarism, failure to acknowledge sources, copying from other candidates or collusion, with 415 penalties issued, representing 16 per cent of all penalties. The number of penalties issued for this category of malpractice has steadily declined over the last five years with a 64 per cent reduction from 2008.

Other common types of malpractice for which penalties were issued comprised inclusion of inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in the exam paper or coursework (250 penalties, representing 10 per cent of all penalties); disruptive behaviour in the exam room (235 penalties, representing 9 per cent of all penalties); and attempting to pass or receive information that could be related to an exam (96 penalties, representing 4 per cent of all penalties), (see Table 3 and Figure 4).

Figure 4: Number of penalties issued for the five most common categories of malpractice, 2008–12



School/college malpractice

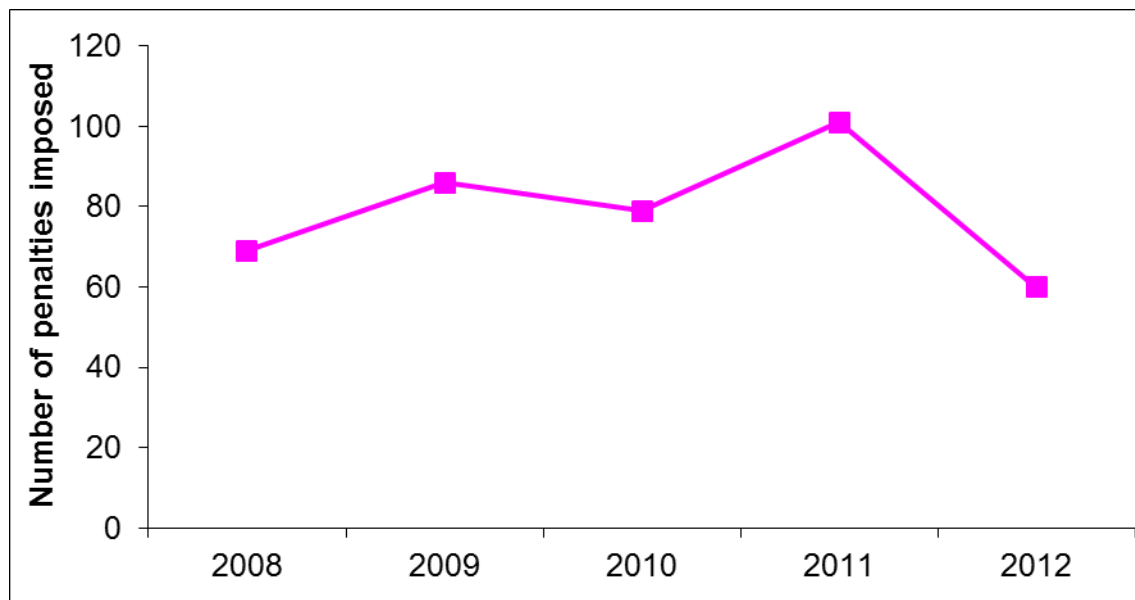
Awarding organisations must investigate and, where necessary, penalise schools/colleges and school/college staff involved in malpractice. Instances of school/college staff malpractice can range from actions that are intended to give an unfair advantage to candidates in an exam or assessment to ignorance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

School/college staff malpractice

Awarding organisations will normally impose sanctions and penalties on school/college 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.

For the June 2012 exam series, 60 penalties were issued to school/college staff, a decrease of 41 per cent from the previous year when 101 penalties were issued (see Figure 5 and Table 4). This figure represents the number of penalties issued; more than one penalty may have been imposed for an individual case.

Figure 5: Number of penalties imposed on school/college staff for malpractice, 2008–12



The most common penalty issued to school/college staff was suspension from involvement in exams or assessments (23 cases, representing 38 per cent of penalties). The second most common penalty was a written warning (22 cases, representing 37 per cent of penalties). There were also eight requirements for

training or mentoring of staff and seven cases of the imposition of special conditions on an individual's future involvement in exams or assessments (see Table 4).

Most of these penalties were issued as a result of school/college staff giving inappropriate assistance to candidates (40 cases, representing 67 per cent of all penalties imposed on school/college staff). The second most common cause for a penalty being issued was for other reasons (14 cases, representing 23 per cent of penalties), (see Table 5). Other reasons can involve, but are not limited to, entering the exam room to coach or prompt candidates, and allowing candidates to carry on working for an extended period of time after the official finishing time.

School/college malpractice penalties

There are more than 6,000 centres (usually schools or colleges) in the UK delivering GCSE and/or A level exams. When malpractice is judged to be the result of a serious management failure an awarding organisation may apply sanctions against the whole department or school/college. For the June 2012 exam series there were 130 penalties issued to schools/colleges, more than double from the previous year (see Figure 6 and Table 6).

This figure represents the number of penalties issued; more than one penalty may have been imposed in relation to an individual case. Penalties and special conditions on schools/colleges may be applied individually or in combination, depending on the circumstances and the evidence.

Figure 6: Number of penalties imposed on schools/colleges for malpractice, 2008–12



The penalties that an awarding organisation can issue as a result of school/college malpractice range from a written warning about the implications of repeating the offence to withdrawing approval for a school/college to offer some or all qualifications.

For the June 2012 exam series the most common penalty issued was a written warning (119 cases, representing 92 per cent of penalties). This is where most of the increase from last year has been, with nearly three and a half times as many written warnings issued, compared with last year. Almost all of these warnings were issued by one awarding organisation which has stated it is the result of a new internal management procedure and a more rigorous warning process in relation to malpractice.

The second most common penalty was the withdrawal of school/college recognition (five cases, representing 4 per cent of penalties issued), (see Table 6).

The three categories for reasons why awarding organisations issue penalties to schools/colleges are: as a result of a breach of security, giving assistance to candidates or other reasons. Other reasons can involve schools/colleges not adhering to the requirements of an exam, such as opening question papers early without authorisation, allowing candidates to sit an exam at the wrong time or a lack of appropriate invigilation during an exam.

There were 106 penalties imposed as a result of other reasons (representing 82 per cent of penalties imposed on schools/colleges). There were 21 penalties imposed as a result of schools/colleges breaching the security of confidential exam materials (16 per cent of penalties). The remaining three cases, representing 2 per cent were imposed for schools/colleges giving inappropriate assistance to candidates (see Table 7).

Tables

Table 1: Total scripts marked for GCSE and A level summer exam series, 2008–12

England, Wales & Northern Ireland							
Year	Number of scripts						Total
	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	
2008	7,300,482	3,836,345	4,217,159	1,317,327	523,449		17,194,762
2009	6,800,493	3,778,240	3,829,081	1,335,063	492,576		16,235,453
2010	6,411,172	3,619,804	3,660,339	1,423,949	538,131		15,653,395
2011	6,089,628	3,661,614	3,238,906	1,610,075	444,771	19,858	15,064,852
2012	5,719,303	3,661,462	2,939,135	1,573,038	467,825	898	14,361,661

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. 2008 includes GCE, GCSE and overseas and coursework entries.
3. 2009 includes GCE, GCSE, Principal Learning, and overseas entries.
4. 2010 includes GCE, GCSE and overseas entries.
5. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. In previous years, specifications were delivered in conjunction with CCEA.

Table 2: Penalties issued to candidates for malpractice, by type of penalty, June exam series, 2008–12

England, Wales & Northern Ireland								
	Year	Number of penalties issued						Total
		AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	
A warning	2008	570	300	349	100	14		1,333
	2009	701	464	355	85	14		1,619
	2010	467	276	348	52	16		1,159
	2011	435	311	272	101	5	0	1,124
	2012	243	205	196	69	15	0	728
Loss of marks	2008	919	381	599	168	27		2,094
	2009	957	406	549	200	64		2,176
	2010	919	347	699	203	27		2,195
	2011	790	442	480	169	27	0	1,908
	2012	486	339	277	167	10	0	1,279
Loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	2008	278	193	257	15	16		759
	2009	228	154	210	33	29		654
	2010	300	154	254	42	27		777
	2011	244	156	232	84	14	0	730
	2012	230	105	155	45	8	0	543
Total	2008	1,767	874	1,205	283	57		4,186
	2009	1,886	1,024	1,114	318	107		4,449
	2010	1,686	777	1,301	297	70		4,131
	2011	1,469	909	984	354	46	0	3,762
	2012	959	649	628	281	33	0	2,550
Percentage of scripts to which a penalty was applied	2008	0.02%	0.02%	0.03%	0.02%	0.01%		0.02%
	2009	0.03%	0.03%	0.03%	0.02%	0.02%		0.03%
	2010	0.03%	0.02%	0.04%	0.02%	0.01%		0.03%
	2011	0.02%	0.02%	0.03%	0.02%	0.01%	0.00%	0.02%
	2012	0.02%	0.02%	0.02%	0.02%	0.01%	0.00%	0.02%

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. In previous years, specifications were delivered in conjunction with CCEA.

Table 3: Penalties issued to candidates for malpractice, by category of malpractice, June exam series, 2008-12

England, Wales & Northern Ireland		Number of penalties issued						
	Year	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	Total
Introducing unauthorised material into an examination room ¹	2008	793	388	437	126	17		1,761
	2009	799	488	418	157	40		1,902
	2010	817	390	561	153	35		1,956
	2011	770	418	305	204	28	0	1,725
	2012	567	347	239	155	17	0	1,325
Copying from other candidates, collusion, plagiarism (including misuse of ICT)	2008	375	254	412	86	30		1,157
	2009	434	261	282	74	61		1,112
	2010	244	205	310	76	25		860
	2011	173	198	301	25	15	0	712
	2012	116	112	132	45	10	0	415
Disruptive behaviour in the examination room (including use of offensive language)	2008	251	110	115	28	9		513
	2009	262	80	156	36	5		539
	2010	250	68	81	28	4		431
	2011	158	88	83	54	2	0	385
	2012	92	59	53	29	2	0	235
Including inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in examination papers or coursework	2008	154	30	118	16	0		318
	2009	159	48	132	10	0		349
	2010	134	29	196	13	0		372
	2011	136	87	187	13	0	0	423
	2012	64	38	133	15	0	0	250
Obtaining, receiving, exchanging or attempting to pass information that could be related to an examination	2008	68	45	71	18	1		203
	2009	77	60	51	32	0		220
	2010	85	43	59	11	0		198
	2011	79	50	30	39	0	0	198
	2012	22	33	18	23	0	0	96
Failing to follow awarding organisation supervision requirements	2008	52	31	8	8	0		99
	2009	50	42	14	2	0		108
	2010	102	7	19	16	0		144
	2011	98	8	22	14	0	0	142
	2012	42	25	22	10	1	0	100
Failing to follow instructions from invigilators, supervisors or the awarding organisation	2008	20	3	27	1	0		51
	2009	72	9	48	1	2		132
	2010	28	30	68	0	0		126
	2011	34	47	53	4	0	0	138
	2012	25	24	24	4	0	0	77
Other ²	2008	33	13	17	0	0		63
	2009	30	36	13	6	1		86
	2010	26	5	7	0	6		44
	2011	21	13	3	1	1	0	39
	2012	31	11	7	0	3	0	52
Total number of penalties issued	2008	1,746	874	1,205	283	57		4,165
	2009	1,883	1,024	1,114	318	109		4,448
	2010	1,686	777	1,301	297	70		4,131
	2011	1,469	909	984	354	46	0	3,762
	2012	959	649	628	281	33	0	2,550

Notes:

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

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

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

3. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.

4. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. In previous years, specifications were delivered in conjunction with CCEA.

Table 4: Penalties imposed on school/college staff for malpractice, June exam series, 2008–12

England, Wales & Northern Ireland		
	Year	Penalties imposed
		Total
Written warning	2008	37
	2009	26
	2010	32
	2011	43
	2012	22
Requirement for staff training or mentoring	2008	7
	2009	14
	2010	5
	2011	19
	2012	8
Staff suspension from involvement in exams or assessments	2008	23
	2009	17
	2010	13
	2011	13
	2012	23
Special conditions to an individual's future involvement in exams or assessments	2008	2
	2009	29
	2010	29
	2011	26
	2012	7
Total	2008	69
	2009	86
	2010	79
	2011	101
	2012	60

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.

Table 5: Penalties imposed on school/college staff for malpractice, by reason for penalty, June exam series, 2008–12

England, Wales & Northern Ireland							
	Year	Number of penalties imposed					Total
		AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	
Breach of security	2008	2	0	1	0	0	3
	2009	7	0	4	0	0	11
	2010	14	3	0	0	0	17
	2011	4	0	2	0	3	9
	2012	5	0	1	0	0	6
Giving assistance to a candidate(s)	2008	11	14	17	0	3	45
	2009	17	6	30	1	4	58
	2010	35	4	11	1	1	52
	2011	20	8	34	4	1	67
	2012	14	0	17	4	5	40
Other reasons ³	2008	4	6	5	5	1	21
	2009	7	0	10	0	0	17
	2010	0	4	6	0	0	10
	2011	14	2	9	0	0	25
	2012	3	2	8	0	1	14
Total	2008	17	20	23	5	4	69
	2009	31	6	44	1	4	86
	2010	49	11	17	1	1	79
	2011	38	10	45	4	4	101
	2012	22	2	26	4	6	60

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. In previous years, specifications were delivered in conjunction with CCEA.
3. Other reasons can involve but are not limited to, entering the exam room to coach or prompt candidates, and allowing candidates to carry on working for an extended period of time after the official finishing time.

Table 6: Penalties imposed on schools/colleges for malpractice, June exam series, 2009–12

England, Wales & Northern Ireland		
	Year	Penalties imposed
		Total
Written warning	2009	44
	2010	43
	2011	35
	2012	119
School/college to review and provide report on malpractice	2009	16
	2010	53
	2011	18
	2012	4
Increased level of inspection and monitoring of school/college	2009	7
	2010	5
	2011	0
	2012	0
Restriction on school's/college's access to exam materials	2009	0
	2010	3
	2011	0
	2012	1
Independent invigilators	2009	3
	2010	0
	2011	0
	2012	0
Suspension of entries	2009	0
	2010	0
	2011	0
	2012	1
Withdrawal of school/college recognition	2009	0
	2010	2
	2011	3
	2012	5
Total	2009	70
	2010	106
	2011	56
	2012	130

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. Data prior to 2009 were not available.
3. An awarding organisation introduced a new internal management and more rigorous warning process in 2012, so care should be taken when comparing figures with previous years.

Table 7: Penalties imposed on schools/colleges for malpractice, by reason for penalty, June exam series, 2008–12

England, Wales & Northern Ireland								
	Year	Number of penalties imposed						Total
		AQA	Edexcel ¹	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	
Breach of security	2008	2	0	4	0	0		6
	2009	1	0	1	0	0		2
	2010	4	47	4	0	1		56
	2011	0	17	3	0	4	0	24
	2012	4	15	2	0	0	0	21
Giving assistance to a candidate(s)	2008	1	16	3	0	0		20
	2009	3	12	5	0	0		20
	2010	4	12	1	0	0		17
	2011	1	5	1	0	0	0	7
	2012	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Other reasons ²	2008	7	4	4	6	5		26
	2009	9	35	2	0	2		48
	2010	1	26	1	0	5		33
	2011	1	14	2	0	8	0	25
	2012	0	105	1	0	0	0	106
Total	2008	10	20	11	6	5		52
	2009	13	47	8	0	2		70
	2010	9	85	6	0	6		106
	2011	2	36	6	0	12	0	56
	2012	4	122	4	0	0	0	130

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Edexcel changed its data collection process during 2009/10 and also introduced a new internal management and more rigorous warning process in 2012, so comparison of figures with previous years is not advised.

2. Other reasons include schools/colleges not adhering to the requirements of an exam, such as opening question papers early without authorisation, schools/colleges allowing candidates to sit an exam at an incorrect time and a lack of appropriate invigilation during an exam.

3. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.

4. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. In previous years, specifications were delivered in conjunction with CCEA.

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