



Malpractice in GCSE, AS and A level:

**Background information accompanying statistical release for  
summer 2019 examination series – Northern Ireland**

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# Information about the statistics

## Purpose

This release presents data on candidate<sup>1</sup> and centre<sup>2</sup> malpractice in GCSE, GCE AS and A level in Northern Ireland (NI) in the summer 2019 examination series.

## Geographical coverage

This report presents data on malpractice in Northern Ireland. Five awarding organisations offer GCSE and A level qualifications in Northern Ireland:

- AQA Education (AQA)
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- Pearson Education Ltd. (Pearson)
- WJEC-CBAC Ltd. (WJEC)<sup>3</sup>

These five awarding organisations are members of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), which closely monitors examination administration and conduct in England, Wales and NI.

## What is malpractice?

Malpractice occurs when the integrity of an examination or assessment has been undermined or compromised, intentionally or unintentionally. This can include for example, deliberate attempts by candidates to communicate with one another during an examination or assessment, plagiarism, or failures by centre staff to comply with an awarding organisation's instructions. For more information on malpractice, see JCQ's guide on [suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments](#).

## What are awarding organisations' responsibilities?

CCEA Regulation [publishes conditions](#) that set out the requirements 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 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 allegations or suspicions of malpractice and to manage the effect of any malpractice where it is established that

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<sup>1</sup> A candidate is a learner who has been entered for a unit or component.

<sup>2</sup> A centre is a school, college or training organisation which enters candidates for qualifications

<sup>3</sup> Schools were [issued guidance](#) by the Department of Education informing centres that WJEC GCSEs would not be available for schools in NI to use from September 2017. This is the last summer series for which schools in NI would have entered candidates for WJEC GCSEs.

malpractice has occurred. Steps must be taken by awarding organisations to prevent reoccurrence and action taken against those responsible.

In addition, the conditions require the awarding organisations to have up-to-date written procedures relating to the investigation of suspected malpractice. The awarding organisations are also required to keep under review centres' arrangements to prevent and investigate malpractice.

### **How is malpractice investigated?**

Awarding organisations may investigate any instances of alleged or suspected malpractice in both examined and non-examined assessments (including coursework, controlled assessment, practical assessments, oral assessments, etc.) and take action with respect to the candidates, centre staff, and centres concerned to protect the integrity of the assessments, or to prevent reoccurrences of malpractice.

Centres should report all incidents of malpractice to the relevant awarding organisations and co-operate with subsequent investigations.

### **What are the penalties for malpractice?**

#### **Candidate malpractice**

Awarding organisations may impose penalties on candidates found to have committed malpractice. The penalties for candidate malpractice vary depending on the type of offence. These penalties can include written warnings, loss of marks, and disqualification from units, components, or whole qualifications. An individual candidate can be penalised more than once in an examination series and by more than one awarding organisation.

#### **Centre staff malpractice**

Awarding organisations may also impose penalties on centre staff found guilty of malpractice. These penalties 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 that awarding organisation's examinations and assessments for a set period.

#### **Centre malpractice**

Awarding organisations must investigate and, where necessary, sanction centres involved in malpractice that arises from a failure in management. Instances of malpractice by centres can range from actions intended to give an unfair advantage to candidates in an examination or assessment to ignorance of, or inappropriate application of, the assessment regulations. Where there is evidence that malpractice is the result of a serious management

failure, an awarding organisation may apply sanctions against a whole department of the centre.

## **Data source**

Awarding organisations submit data to Ofqual for GCSEs, AS and A levels they award. Ofqual processes the data returns and shares them with CCEA Regulation. Any provider that does not return a complete set of data within the collection period is contacted to make sure the data are as complete as possible. Due to the nature of suspected malpractice investigations (which sometimes can arise after an examination series has closed), the awarding organisations may revise their figures for an examination series in subsequent years.

## **Limitations**

There is potential for error in the information provided by awarding organisations, therefore CCEA Regulation cannot guarantee that the information received from the awarding organisations is correct. CCEA Regulation compares the data over time and checks for systematic issues. Summary data are sent back to awarding organisations for checking and confirmation.

## **Revisions**

Once published, data are not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to update data that were previously unavailable or subject to change.

The figures for summer 2017 published in this release are different from those published in the last release as some awarding organisations have recently submitted revised 2017 figures. This was to capture the cases that were still in process when the data were originally reported.

## **Confidentiality and rounding**

To ensure confidentiality of the accompanying data, all figures have been rounded to the nearest 5. If the value is less than 5 (1 to 4), it is represented as 0~ and 0 represents zero values.

Total values of rows or columns are calculated using unrounded figures; the sum of rounded figures may differ from the total reported.

All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, except where smaller magnitudes are needed for meaningful interpretation. As a result of rounded figures, the percentages (calculated on actual figures) shown in tables may not necessarily add up to 100.

## Status

These statistics are classified as Official Statistics.

## Useful links

Previous releases of malpractice statistics for Northern Ireland as well as those for England and Wales can be found [here](#).

## Feedback

We welcome your feedback on our publications. Should you have any comments on this statistical release and how to improve it to meet your needs please contact us at [ccearegulation@ccea.org.uk](mailto:ccearegulation@ccea.org.uk).

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