

## More than 1,300 VTQ penalties issued in 2019 to 2020

News story

1,381 malpractice cases among more than one million awards, Ofqual report shows.



Awarding organisations issued 1,381 penalties in the last academic year, a new Ofqual report, [Malpractice in vocational and technical qualifications](#), says. These are among one million certificates issued in the same year for the types of qualifications covered by the report.

Ofqual, the regulator for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs), gathers this data from 40 awarding organisations. We have decided not to compare 2019 to 2020 figures with those for previous years due to the exceptional impact of COVID-19.

Catherine Large, Ofqual Executive Director for Vocational and Technical Qualifications, said:

“These qualifications really matter. They are the passport to a job or more training, so it’s important that we trust their value. That is why we require awarding organisations to have procedures in place to prevent, investigate and act when they find malpractice. I am pleased that the number of penalties is small in relation to the one million or so VTQs that were awarded in 2019 to 2020.”

This report also says:

Students, at 78%, received most of the penalties, while no penalties for examiners were reported.

973 penalties were issued for performance table qualifications.

The number of penalties was highest in paper-based exams (73%), followed by online exams (19%) and, lastly, performance-based tasks.

For students, plagiarism was the most common type of malpractice, while the most common type of penalty was a warning followed by a loss of marks. A loss of marks was the most common penalty when a student was found with a mobile phone or other communication device. A 'loss of aggregation or certification opportunity' was most common for 'collusion'.

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## [Motorists urged to check tyres before setting off this bank holiday](#)

Motorists are being encouraged to check their vehicles before setting off this August Bank Holiday.

Only one in six drivers remembered to check their tyres before setting off on a long journey, according to research commissioned by National Highways (formerly Highways England).

Yet one in five motorway breakdowns are caused by worn or incorrectly inflated tyres and nearly a third of drivers confessed that they're not confident checking tyre pressure. And with National Highways lifting almost 990 miles of roadworks this bank holiday, meaning around 98 per cent of England's major A-roads and motorway network will be free from roadworks, the message is to plan ahead and carry out some basic vehicle checks before setting off.

Dave Harford, Traffic Officer for National Highways, who patrols the M5, M42, M50 and other major routes said:

This is the last bank holiday of the summer, so we expect the roads to be busy with people looking to make the most of a long weekend. But the last thing anybody wants on the way to their destination is to have a vehicle breakdown. It's really important people spend a few minutes checking the condition of their tyres before setting off.

The advice from National Highways is simple – check your tyre pressure, tread depth and tyre age including the spare, before you set off on a long journey.

Look out for cuts or wear over the full width of the tyre and don't forget to check the sidewall.

Dave added:

Although the legal limit for tyre tread depth is 1.6mm, we recommend you don't let the tread get that low. Changing the tyre at 2mm in summer and 3 mm in winter is good practice and maintains overall good tyre performance in all conditions. To check your tyre pressure, visit most fuel and service station forecourts, which have an air machine for checking and inflating your tyre pressure.

If you are stopped by the police and found with illegal tyres, you could receive a £2,500 fine and 3 penalty points per tyre.

National Highways says simple checks are a way to make sure the vehicle is roadworthy. Things to consider are:

## **Tyres**

Ensure tyre pressures are suitable for the load and check the condition of tyres, including the spare. Look out for cuts or wear across the whole tyre including sidewall.

## **Engine oil**

Check oil levels regularly and top up if needed. Take your car back to the garage if you're topping up more than usual

## **Water**

Always keep your screen wash topped up with a good ratio of water and screen wash to maximise the cleaning efficiency so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen easily.

## **Lights**

If your indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights or brake lights are not functioning properly, you are putting yourself and your family at risk. In addition, your vehicle may fail its MoT

## **Fuel**

Before setting out make sure you have enough fuel to get to your destination. Running out of fuel can put you, your family and other road users at risk unnecessarily.

If you experience problems with your vehicle and you can't leave the motorway you should always try to go left – to an emergency area, a hard shoulder, motorway services or slip road hard shoulder.

But if that is not possible and you have stopped in a live lane or feel your life is in danger you must stay in your vehicle with your seatbelt and hazard lights on and call 999 immediately.

Drivers should also take a few minutes to plan their journeys in advance. Live updates on traffic flow can be found on [Traffic England](#)

Visit our website for more information on [checking your tyres](#).

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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# **Special Session of the Human Rights Council on Afghanistan: UK Statement**

Madam President, High Commissioner Bachelet, Colleagues,

The United Kingdom welcomes this session and wishes to add its thanks to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation for requesting it.

The United Kingdom – like other partners and countries – remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Afghanistan.

And I am particularly grateful to Shahrzad Akbar [Chairperson for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission] for her insights that she has provided to the Council today.

Over the last twenty years, the United Kingdom and our NATO allies have worked to promote human rights in Afghanistan, especially for women and girls.

Twenty years ago almost no girls went to school, and women were banned from positions of governance. Now, 3.6 million Afghan girls are in school, and women hold over a quarter of the seats in Afghanistan's parliament.

Maternal mortality has almost halved, and infant mortality has decreased faster than in any low income country.

These gains must not be reversed.

We therefore urge the Taliban to ensure the protection of civilians, to refrain from reprisals, and to uphold human rights, especially those of women, children and members of minorities, including all ethnic and religious communities – a point well-articulated by the High Commissioner.

Those who have worked tirelessly to improve human rights in Afghanistan, including civil society, human rights defenders, and members and staff of the

Human Rights Commission: they must not be harmed.

We urge the Taliban to allow the safe and orderly departure of foreign nationals, and those who wish to leave Afghanistan.

Madam President, the Taliban need to make a political decision to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. And they must understand that they will be held accountable if they do fail to do so.

We also call for a coordinated and concerted effort from the international community to address the humanitarian emergency, which has been exacerbated by famine, COVID and internal displacement.

And let me assure you of this, Madam President, finally: the UK will play its part. We have already announced a doubling our humanitarian aid and development assistance commitment to Afghanistan, to £286 million.

Madam President,

The Council has a crucial role to play. The international community has a crucial role to play in holding the Taliban to account – their actions must match their words. And collectively, we must give the human rights situation our total and utter focus, sustained attention in future sessions.

Thank you.

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## [Businesses given more time to apply new product safety marking](#)

News story

Government confirms businesses will have an extra year to start using the new product safety marking – the UKCA marking.



- Businesses will have an extra year to start using the UKCA marking, the

new product safety marking in the UK

- this applies to all goods where businesses were due to begin using the UKCA marking by the end of this year (2021)
- businesses will have more time to meet their legal obligations given the continued impact of the pandemic, providing clarity and certainty

Businesses will have an additional year to apply new product safety markings for most products placed on the market in England, Scotland and Wales, the government has announced today (24 August).

The [UK Conformity Assessed \(UKCA\) marking](#) allows the UK to have control over its goods regulations, maintaining the high product safety standards expected in the UK.

Recognising the impact of the pandemic on businesses, the government will extend this deadline to 1 January 2023 to apply UKCA marks for certain products to demonstrate compliance with product safety regulations, rather than 1 January 2022.

The UKCA marking replaces the product safety labelling the UK previously used while a member of the EU, such as the CE mark.

Today's announcement follows the government's extensive and ongoing engagement with business groups and reflects the issues businesses have raised, particularly given the impact of the pandemic.

Businesses must take action to ensure they are ready to apply UKCA marking by 1 January 2023, the final deadline.

The government will continue to engage with manufacturers to ensure they understand what they need to do to get ready, including through a new series of webinars. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has already run several webinars in the last few months and engaged extensively through trade associations.

- the UKCA marking covers most goods which previously required the CE marking, known as 'new approach' goods, in addition to aerosol products that previously required the 'reverse epsilon' marking
- this extension means all goods which previously required the CE marking will not need to use the UKCA marking until 1 January 2023. The exception is medical devices, where businesses will not need to use the UKCA marking until 1 July 2023
- to extend the deadline, the government will introduce a statutory instrument under section 8 of the European Union Withdrawal Act later this year
- businesses have been able to use the UKCA mark since 1 January 2021 to demonstrate their conformity with product standards in England, Scotland and Wales
- under the terms of the Protocol, Northern Ireland will continue to recognise the CE marking for goods placed on the market in Northern Ireland. They will need to use the UKNI marking if they use a UK Conformity Assessment Body to test their products

- the government has published the [UK Market Conformity Assessment Bodies database](#) which businesses can use to identify the appropriate body to certify their products
- to find out what labelling requirements apply to your product, businesses should read the [Product safety for businesses: A to Z of industry](#), guidance published by the Office for Product Safety and Standards
- businesses can also [sign up to the upcoming webinar on the new regulations](#). The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will also be running a series of further webinars in the coming months

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## [Applications for the UK Government's Chevening Scholarships open 3 August 2021](#)

Applications for Chevening Scholarships to study in the UK are open between 3 August and 2 November 2021, with applications to be submitted via [www.chevening.org/apply](http://www.chevening.org/apply)

Chevening Scholarships are awarded to individuals from all backgrounds who can demonstrate that they have the commitment and skills required to create positive change, and can show how a UK master's degree will help them do that. The scholarship offers full financial support for scholars to study for any eligible master's degree at any UK university whilst also gaining access to a wide range of exclusive academic, professional, and cultural experiences. Since the programme was created in 1983, over 50,000 professionals have had the opportunity to develop in the UK through Chevening. There are more than 1,500 scholarships on offer globally for the 2022/2023 academic year, demonstrating the UK's ongoing commitment towards developing the leaders of tomorrow.

Head of Scholarships at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Naomi Rayner, said:

As the world continues to tackle major global issues such as Covid-19 and climate change, international cooperation is more essential than ever. Chevening seeks to build an international community of people who are committed to working together to drive positive change. We do this by bringing together incredible people from around the world and supporting them, through education, to achieve their goals.

In the UK we are proud of our world class universities and we know that our learning environments are enriched by the wide diversity of cultures, experiences and viewpoints represented on our campuses. Chevening scholars make a significant contribution to these communities, as well as becoming an important part of our network of over 50,000 alumni.

Chevening represents the very best of the UK, welcoming people from across the world to study, grow, and thrive. Being a part of the Chevening network instils a strong sense of pride and responsibility. I am consistently inspired by the passion and commitment of those in the Chevening community and I look forward to hearing from this year's applicants.'

Chargé d'Affaires, British Embassy Bangkok, Alexandra McKenzie, said:

If you are someone who is passionate about driving change, whether on a local or global scale, if you want to be the best at what you do and if you have the imagination to inspire others, then a Chevening scholarship could be the perfect opportunity for you.

There is no such thing as a 'typical' scholar. Your age, race, gender, sexuality, religion and cultural background do not matter to us. We want to see that you have energy, curiosity, compassion a clear vision for your future and the ability to achieve your goals. If this sounds like you, then you are very likely to fit in with our community of over 50,000 alumni worldwide.

Our alumni network is full of dynamic influencers who have shared the same experience that you will. They can offer encouragement, mentorship, advice, and contacts. When you return home after your studies you should feel well-equipped to start making a real difference professionally or socially.

There is a lot to gain from submitting a thoughtful application, so if you have what it takes to be a Chevening Scholar, I would encourage you to apply before the 3 November deadline.'

The call for new applicants follows the selection of 23 scholars from Thailand, who won an award to study at a UK university this year. Successful applicants have been sharing their stories through the #ChosenForChevening hashtag on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

More information Visit [www.chevening.org/scholarships](http://www.chevening.org/scholarships) for detailed information on the eligibility criteria and scholarship specifications.

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Notes to editors Chevening Scholarships are the UK Government's global scholarship programme, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development



Office (FCDO) and partner organisations. The scholarships support study at UK universities – mostly one year taught master's degrees – for individuals with demonstrable potential to become future leaders, decision-makers, and opinion formers.

Chevening began in 1983 and has developed into a prestigious international awards scheme. Chevening Scholars come from over 160 countries and territories worldwide, and over the past five years we have awarded almost 10,000 scholarships. There are over 50,000 Chevening Alumni around the world who comprise an influential and highly regarded global network.

The name 'Chevening' comes from Chevening House in Sevenoaks, Kent – currently the joint official residence of the UK's Foreign Secretary.

More information is available at [www.chevening.org](http://www.chevening.org)