Cheating in the 2018 end of year VCE examinations

The VCAA is committed to safeguarding the integrity and fairness of VCE external assessment.

Unfortunately a small number of students seek an unfair advantage over the overwhelming majority of honest VCE exam candidates.

To ensure the fairness and integrity of VCE examinations, the VCAA has established clear and consistent rules, which it rigorously enforces, in conjunction with schools.

These rules and the VCAA’s processes for investigating breaches deter and prevent cheating and ensure that students caught breaking the rules are appropriately penalised.

These rules also ensure that students doing the right thing are not disadvantaged by the behaviour of other students, whether this involves nuisance, annoyance or interference.

The VCAA is increasingly able to use analysis of anomalous results to identify possible cases of cheating, which are then investigated. This enhanced capability means that it is harder than ever to get away with cheating in VCE examinations.

VCE Examination Rules

The VCAA works closely with schools to ensure students are made aware of and are familiar with the rules for VCE examinations.

There are 22 VCAA rules for the conduct of VCE examinations, which are communicated to schools each year.

Examination supervisors are trained in the application of the rules and the reporting requirements for any alleged breaches of those rules.

VCE students receive clear advice on VCE examination rules in the General Achievement Test (GAT) brochure and the *VCE Exams Navigator* booklet. The GAT brochure is distributed to schools before the GAT. The *VCE Exams Navigator* is distributed to students in Term 3 and is made available on the VCAA website at the same time.

The VCAA rules are also available on the VCAA website and displayed outside all examination rooms.

VCAA Review Committees

VCAA Review Committees are comprised of three members of the VCAA Board or VCAA staff. They are chaired by a VCAA Board member and are assisted by an experienced lawyer.

VCAA Review Committees determine if a breach of VCE examination rules has occurred and, if so, the appropriate penalty, after hearing all the available evidence, including hearing from the student if the student has elected to attend the hearing.

Review Committees administer penalties that maintain the integrity of the examination system. They ensure that honest students are rewarded for their efforts.

Penalties often exceed any possible advantage.

Breaches

In 2018 there were 85,069 students who sat at least one end of year VCE exam.

Some 52,360 students were eligible to complete their VCE and there were 109 subjects with a written exam.

The VCAA investigated alleged contraventions of the VCAA examination rules by 61 students arising from the 2018 end of year VCE examinations.

The comparable figures in previous years are shown in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Number of investigations** |
| 2012 | 78 |
| 2013 | 54 |
| 2014 | 38 |
| 2015 | 65 |
| 2016 | 68 |
| 2017 | 86 |

The types of alleged breaches that were reported in 2018 are shown in the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reported incident type** | **Number** | **Percentage** |
| Attempted to cheat by copying (including alleged allowing copying) | 18 | 28.6 |
| Mobile phone in examination | 12 | 19 |
| Did not cease writing when time elapsed | 17 | 27 |
| Unauthorised material (including notes) | 15 | 23.8 |
| Began writing or using calculator before instructed | 1 | 1.6 |

Mobile phones

Figures for alleged incidents involving mobile phones in previous years are shown in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Year** | **VCE examination incidents involving a mobile phone** |
| 2013 | 15 |
| 2014 | 9 |
| 2015 | 18 |
| 2016 | 19 |
| 2017 | 5 |

The VCE examination rules prohibit the possession of mobile phones in examinations. Historically, mobile phones have been a major category in breaches of exam rules, however, 2017 saw a significant decrease in the number of mobile phone breaches.

In 2018 the VCAA investigated 12 students for mobile phone possession in examinations.

Six mobile phone possession incidents were referred to Review Committees for determination. Where it was established that a student had been in possession of a mobile phone, their VCE results for that subject were reduced by the committee, regardless of whether the student had used the mobile phone during the examination.

Penalties

Serious penalties

Eleven students received significant penalties from the VCAA Review Committees following hearings. These penalties ranged from a reduction of one mark from an examination result, which did not affect the grade or study score of the student, to the reduction of 12 exam grades[[1]](#footnote-1) for multiple examination rule breaches, resulting in a total study score reduction of 18.

* Five students were penalised for being in possession of a mobile phone and three of those matters also involved using the mobile phone to gain an unfair advantage. One student who had breached multiple examination rules received a 12 grade reduction. One student received a two-grade reduction and two students received a one-grade reduction. Another student received a one mark reduction from their examination result, which did not impact their grade or study score.
* Four students were penalised for bringing notes into their exams. One student received a two-mark reduction from their examination result. One student received a two-grade reduction and another student received a one-grade reduction. A student who had breached multiple examination rules received a 12 grade reduction.
* Two students were found to have obtained an unfair advantage by copying multiple choice answers from another student. Both students had their exam grade reduced to UG.
* One student was penalised with a one-grade reduction for repeatedly disobeying the exam supervisor’s instructions to cease writing. The student who breached multiple examination rules and received a 12 grade reduction was also penalised for writing during reading time.

Chief Executive Officer reprimands

Three students received written reprimands from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the VCAA.

Reprimands are issued where a breach of an examination rule has occurred, the student has been interviewed by VCAA investigators, and the CEO has decided that the breach did not result in any advantage being obtained by the student and is not serious enough to refer to a Review Committee.

Cautions

The VCAA issued written cautions to21 students for minor breaches of the VCAA examination rules. Students are cautioned where, after careful investigation, the VCAA is satisfied that there was no intent to cheat and no unfair advantage had been gained by the breach.

No further action

There were 25 cases where the VCAA took no further action, as preliminary investigations found the evidence either did not substantiate the allegation or the alleged actions were of a trivial nature.

1. The examination grading scale ranges from A+ to UG. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)