



Spotting fraudulent qualifications

A comprehensive guide to protecting your institution



The growing threat of fraudulent qualifications



Fraudulent qualifications are a growing concern for universities and institutions, leading to financial losses and reputational damage. As fraudsters become more sophisticated, traditional verification methods are no longer enough to spot fake certificates.

Niico's AI-driven solution helps institutions quickly identify fraudulent qualifications by automating the verification process, reducing human error, and ensuring integrity in the admissions system.



Spotting fraudulent qualifications:

A comprehensive guide to protecting your institution



This guide will provide key insights into spotting fraudulent certificates and how our AI-powered tools can assist in safeguarding your institution.

Whats inside

04 Why fraudulent qualifications matter

05 Spotting fraudulent certificates

06 Example certificate

09 What to look for in fraudulent qualifications

12 The role of AI in preventing fraud

13 Conclusion

14 Contact us



Why fraudulent qualifications matter

The consequences of admitting students with fraudulent qualifications extend far beyond the immediate administrative hassle. According to Niico's Oliwia Stach, "A lot of universities don't even realise that the QN number is actually assigned to a specific subject and a specific grade." This lack of understanding can easily lead to errors in verification, allowing fraudulent certificates to slip through the cracks.

Fraudulent qualifications lead to:

- ✓ Financial losses through student loans that can't be repaid.
- ✓ Damage to institutional reputation, especially when fraud is discovered too late.
- ✓ Increased administrative burden, requiring staff to spend extra time verifying certificates.

Niico's solution combines AI-powered verification tools with human expertise to help you identify fraudulent certificates quickly and accurately, reducing the risk to your institution.



“

A lot of universities don't even realise that the QN number is actually assigned to a specific subject and a specific grade.

Oliwia Stach, Niico

Spotting fraudulent certificates: Key indicators

Identifying fraudulent certificates requires a keen eye for detail. The following section will break down the key signs to look for when verifying a qualification. To help you identify discrepancies, we've provided an example of a fraudulent certificate which highlights the key red flags that should raise suspicion.



Example certificate: Fraudulent vs. Authentic

Below is an example of a fraudulent certificate. Pay close attention to the following highlighted areas that raise red flags:

Fraudulent certificate example (Highlighted inconsistencies)



Font inconsistencies

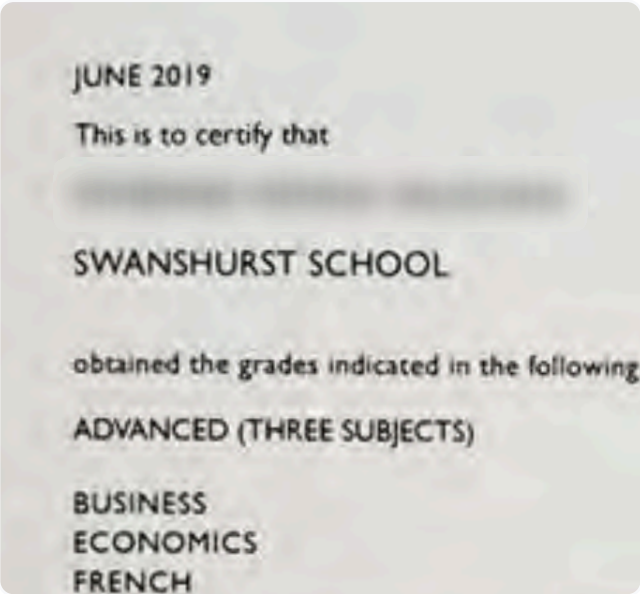
Notice the uneven fonts and altered letter spacing throughout the document. Fraudsters often use different fonts or sizes to create certificates that appear legitimate at first glance. In this case, the font in the "Grade" section is different from the official institution's font.

“

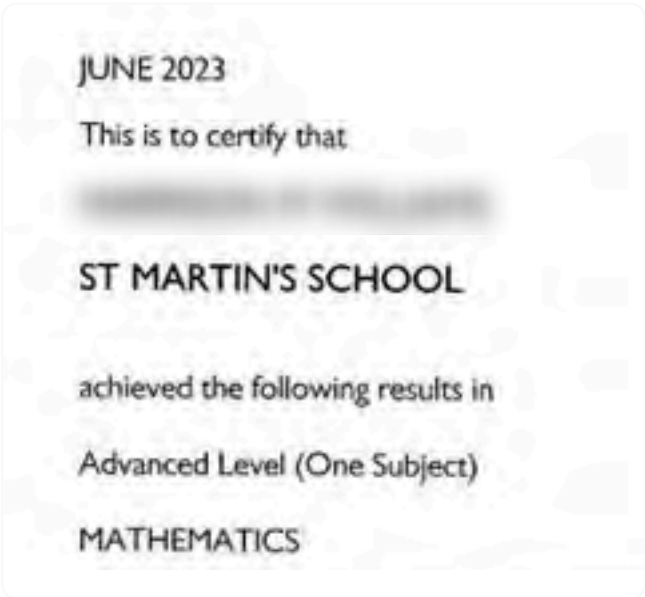
The sophistication of the fraudulent certificates gets better and better each year. It's really hard even for a human to do.

Alistair Sergeant, Niico

✖ Fake



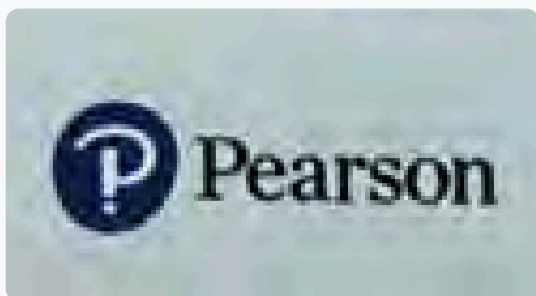
✔ Real



Misaligned logos

The university's logo is slightly misaligned and fuzzy, which is uncommon for authentic certificates. Legitimate institutions use high-quality logos that are crisp and properly aligned.

 Fake



Irregular seal placement

The official seal of the university is often placed inconsistently, indicating potential tampering. Authentic certificates have seals placed with a high degree of consistency.

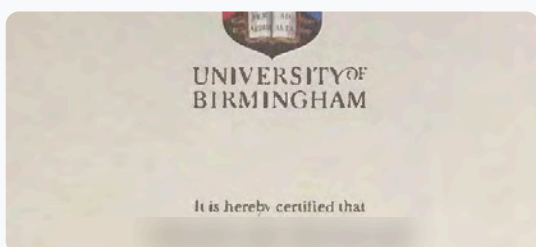
 Fake



Incorrect university details

The university name listed is a misspelling or is not recognised in official databases. When verifying qualifications, the institution should always be easy to find in the official university database.

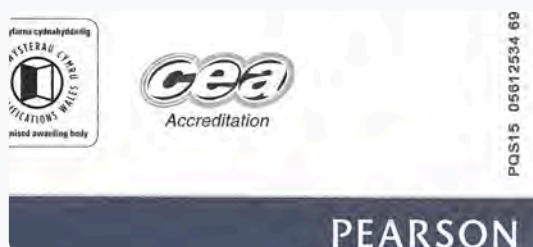
 Fake



Missing accreditation number

An official certificate should include the institution's accreditation number or certification number. In this case, the number is missing or incorrectly displayed in a way that doesn't match official records.

 Fake





Poor quality watermarks

The watermark in the background is too faint to be clearly seen and lacks the complex detail typically present in a genuine certificate.

“

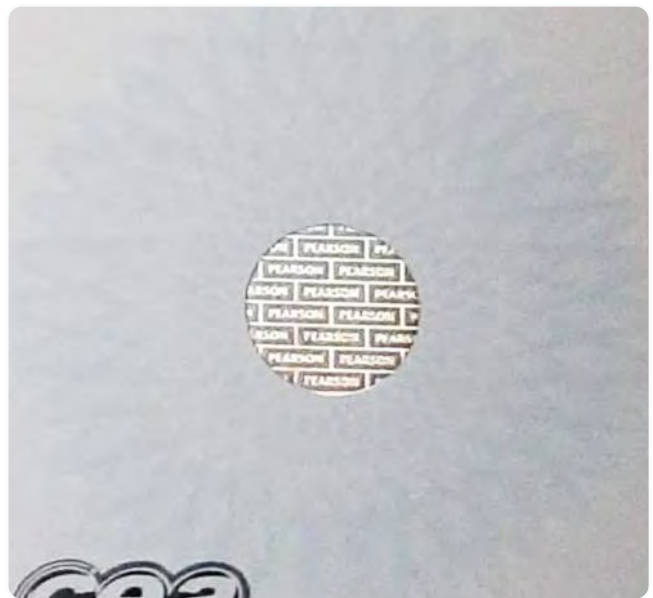
There are nuances in the certificate, like fonts being skewed and shadowing behind some text. It's not always obvious without a deeper look.

Alistair Sergeant, Niico

✖ Fake



✔ Real



What to look for in fraudulent qualifications: A comprehensive checklist

1



Font and text consistency

- ✓ Inconsistent fonts or variations in text size often indicate tampering. Compare the font used for signatures, dates, and key details to the official documents of the institution.
- ✓ Spacing issues: Ensure that text is evenly spaced. Fraudulent certificates often feature irregular spacing between characters, words, or sections.

2



Logos and branding

- ✓ Misaligned logos: A logo that is misaligned, blurry, or faint is a strong indication of fraud. Logos should be clear, high-quality, and consistent across all documents from the institution.
- ✓ Incorrect logos: Fraudulent certificates may use outdated or incorrect logos. Verify that the logo matches the official version used by the institution.

3



Accreditation and institution information

- ✓ **Missing or incorrect accreditation numbers:** An official certificate should include a unique accreditation number for verification. Always verify this number against the institution's official records.
- ✓ **Incorrect university name:** Verify the institution name and its details through official databases. Any discrepancies or misspellings should raise suspicions.

4



Dates and course details

- ✓ **Inconsistent dates:** Check the dates listed on the certificate. Fraudsters often get these details wrong, such as using the wrong academic year or course start date.
- ✓ **Course details:** Ensure the course name and level are correct. Fraudsters may falsify the course title or level to gain access to a particular program or funding.



Watermarks and security features

- ✓ **Low-quality watermarks:** Genuine certificates feature high-quality watermarks that are hard to replicate. These watermarks often include security patterns or text that can only be seen under certain conditions.
- ✓ **Inconsistent watermark placement:** Watermarks should be placed consistently across the certificate. Fraudulent certificates may have watermarks that are too faint or misplaced.



Seal and signature

- ✓ **Irregular seal placement:** A legitimate certificate will always have the institution's seal placed consistently. Check the position, size, and quality of the seal.
- ✓ **Signature inconsistencies:** The signature of the issuing authority should match the official version. Fraudulent certificates may use poorly forged or inconsistent signatures.

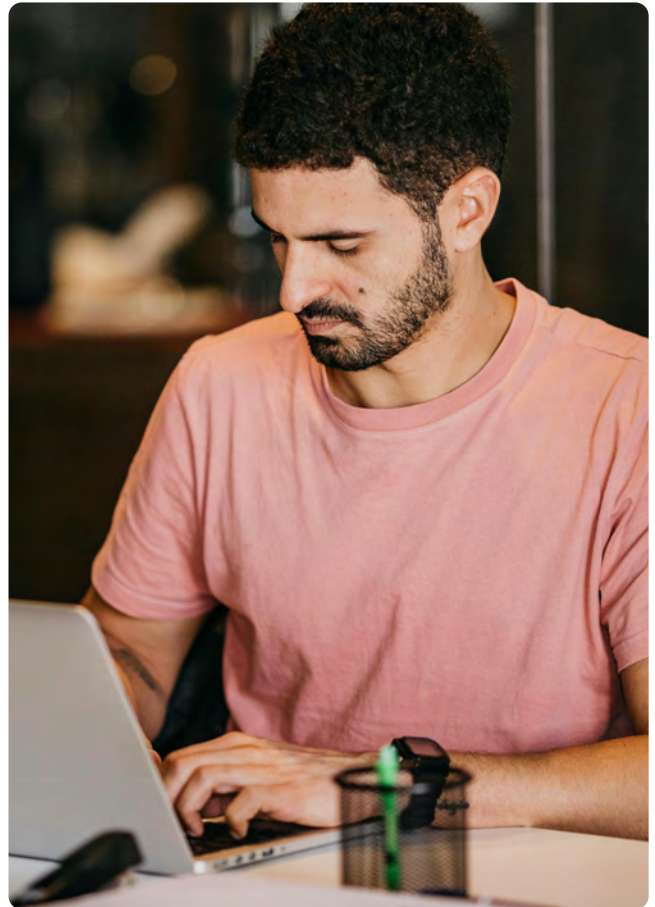
The role of AI in preventing fraud

AI is transforming how institutions verify academic qualifications. By automating the verification process, AI helps institutions flag discrepancies in certificates early, reducing the risk of fraud. As Alistair highlights,

“

Everything we build product-wise is to work alongside humans. Our platform will actually go and do that initial verification piece first and then check if it's fraudulent or not.

Alistair Sergeant, Niico



The key benefits of using AI in fraud detection are:

- ✓ **Speed:** AI can verify certificates in real-time, significantly reducing delays in the admissions process.
- ✓ **Accuracy:** AI flags inconsistencies like font discrepancies and misaligned logos that might be missed by human verification.
- ✓ **Continuous learning:** AI models are updated regularly to adapt to the evolving tactics used by fraudsters.

Conclusion: Protecting your institution from fraud

Fraudulent qualifications pose a significant risk to the integrity of your institution. However, by adopting AI-driven verification tools, you can protect your institution from the growing threat

of fraudulent certificates. Incorporating both AI and human collaboration ensures a seamless verification process, improving both speed and accuracy. As Oliwia explains,



“

The bot can see things at a level that a human can't. Before the automation went live, we found significant amounts of certificates that a human would say were fine, but the bot flagged them for one reason or another.

Oliwia Stach, Niico

By leveraging Niico's AI-powered solution, institutions can stay ahead of fraudulent applications and maintain their reputation for high standards.

Contact us

Are you ready to protect your institution from fraudulent qualifications? Contact Niico today to learn how our AI-driven verification solution can streamline your qualification checks and enhance your admissions process.



0203 553 8084



asergeant@niico.ai

