

12 July 2021

Dear Parents/ Students,

We are writing to give you more information about the results and appeals process this year now the full guidance has been released. Additional JCQ guidance for students and parents can also be found as an attachment to this letter.

Results days will take place at the following dates and times:

A-level- 10th August-8:30am **(Please note this is now a change)**

GCSE- 12th August-9:00am

To ensure Covid safe protocols it may be that we have to stagger the arrival times; if we do we will let you know but we are awaiting further guidance on this. If you don't hear from us, please enter via Main Reception. Please ensure you take a home test the night before coming into school and should you have to isolate for any Covid related reason contact

exams@ga.newcastle.sch.uk and we will arrange a way of getting results to you.

We expect the vast majority of you will be pleased with the results that you will receive from exam boards this year. As the process has been rather different with the cancellation of exams there may be some questions which you might have and the information below will help.

A reminder that the following has already taken place:

- ✓ Effective provision of access arrangements/reasonable adjustments for eligible students.
- ✓ Opportunity for students to raise special consideration.
- ✓ Exam board approved Centre policy shared- on our website in policies section.
- ✓ Completion of Assessment Record to ensure appropriate use of evidence.
- ✓ High level sign off by Head of Department and two senior leaders.
- ✓ Evidence and marks used to arrive at a grade shared with students.
- ✓ Effective standardisation and quality assurance.
- ✓ Accurate checking of data by exams team before submission to exam boards.
- ✓ Sample work sent to the exam board.

How were my child's grades arrived at this year?

Grades this summer were based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). TAGs were submitted to the exam boards by us as a holistic assessment of students' performance in a subject, following a rigorous process of assessment, moderation and quality assurance.

These grades will then be approved by the relevant exam board following external quality assurance checks.

Preit Chahal Principal

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In some cases, the TAGs we submitted may have been reviewed by the exam board, who may have asked us to submit an alternative grade. However, any changes to the grades we submitted were done by professional teachers or reviewers; this year no grades have been changed as a result of an algorithm.

What do I do if I'm not happy with my / my child's grade?

All students have the opportunity to appeal their grade if they meet the eligibility criteria (see below). **It is important to note that an appeal may result in a grade being lowered, staying the same, or going up. So if a student puts in an appeal and their grade is lowered, they will receive the lower grade.**

There is also the option to resit GCSEs, A levels and some AS levels in the autumn, which may be preferable rather than running the risk of a grade being lowered. The design, content and assessment of these papers will be the same as in a normal year.

What are the grounds for appeal?

The main grounds for appeal, as dictated by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) are below:

- You think we have made an **administrative error**: an example of this would be putting the wrong information into a spreadsheet.
- You think we have made a **procedural error**: this means we haven't properly followed our own process, as approved by the exam board. An example of this would be where you've been told you should have received extra time for assessments but this wasn't made available.
- You think the **academic judgement on the selection of evidence was unreasonable**: you think the evidence used to grade you was not reasonable.
- You think the **academic judgement on the grade you were given was unreasonable**.

What does 'unreasonable' mean?

'Unreasonable' is a technical term in this context and means that **no educational professional acting reasonably could have selected the same evidence or come up with the same grade.**

Given the nature of our processes this seems highly unlikely and the vast majority of appeals will result in no grade change.

This means that just because other forms of evidence may have been equally valid to use, the selection of evidence is not unreasonable. Because of the flexibility of the approach this year, every school and college will have used different forms of evidence therefore **a candidate wishing that alternative evidence was used is not grounds for appeal.**

It also means that the independent reviewers will **not** remark or grade students' evidence. Instead, they will look to see whether any teacher acting reasonably could have arrived at the same grade.

What will be the outcome of an appeal?

At either stage of the appeals process (see 'What are the two stages of an appeal?' below), a student's grade may go up, stay the same, or go down. When placing an appeal the student will have to sign a declaration saying that they accept the fact their grade may go down and they may get a lower grade than their original TAG.

What's a priority appeal?

Priority appeals will be handled more quickly than other appeals.

Priority appeals are only open to **A level students starting university this autumn, who have missed out on the conditions of their firm choice.**

If you decided not to confirm a firm conditional offer and to go through clearing instead, JCQ cannot offer you a priority appeal.

JCQ cannot offer priority appeals for GCSE students, unfortunately.

When making a priority appeal, students will have to include their UCAS number so it can be confirmed that it is a genuine priority appeal.

What should I do if I don't get into my first choice of university?

First, don't panic. Speak to the Sixth Form team about your options. You may wish to go through clearing, or sit the autumn exams or summer exams next year to try to improve your grade.

If you are going to appeal your grade, you must let your university know you are appealing. They will then let you know whether they will hold a place for you pending the outcome of an appeal (note that universities are not obliged to hold a place for you; this is at their discretion).

What should I do before appealing?

Students must read the JCQ Student and Parent guide before appealing and any other information the school provides in the results day packs.

We may not be able to offer as much advice and guidance on the likely success of an appeal this summer as we would in normal years, as we have already moderated and quality assured all the grades ourselves and **there are no grade boundaries**.

Our final bit of advice is that given the nature of the way assessments were carried out grades are likely to be slightly more generous than previous years. Please think very carefully as to whether appealing is worthwhile given the risk of it being lowered.

What are the two stages of an appeal?

All appeals, on any of the grounds above, must first go through a **centre review**. At this stage, we will check for any administrative errors, and check that our policies and procedures were followed correctly. Our policy has already been approved by the exam boards, so we are only ensuring that we followed this properly.

The outcome of the centre review will be communicated to students when made.

At the centre review stage, if we find that a grade should go up or down, we will ask the exam board to change it. They will then consider this request.

Following the outcome of a centre review, students may still choose to pursue an **awarding organisation appeal**. They must fill in the form below, which we will then send on their behalf to the exam boards. **Students and parents cannot send appeals directly to the exam board themselves – it must come from us.**

The outcome of the awarding organisation appeal will be communicated to students when made.

How do I make an appeal?

Following results days if you wish to appeal please contact exams@ga.newcastle.sch.uk for an appeal form. **We can only accept and reply to emails sent from the student from their school email account.**

What are the deadlines for priority appeals?

The deadline for requesting a Centre Review is 9am on Monday 16th August (students cannot appeal before results day on 10 August).

We will attempt to complete the centre review by 18th August*. If students wish to progress this to an awarding organisation appeal, they must send the completed form to us by 9am on Monday 23rd August for priority appeals.

*At both stages of the appeals process, there may be the need for specialist, expert knowledge (e.g. subject teachers, SEND knowledge). This may not be possible in August. In such cases, we may have to wait until the start of term, but priority appeals will still be treated as a priority.

What are the deadlines for non-priority appeals?

Non-priority appeals are any A levels, GCSEs or vocational qualifications, where a firm university place is not pending.

The deadline for submitting a centre review is 3 September; and the deadline for submitting an awarding organisation appeal is 10 September.

Appeals received after these dates may still be considered.

You know my / my child's grades. Why can't you tell us? What if you know we haven't met our university conditional offer?

We are forbidden from disclosing the Teacher Assessed Grades to any third party, including students and parents, until results days. Any teacher or member of staff who does this is committing exam malpractice.

Although students may have been given marks or grades on single pieces of evidence, we cannot disclose the final submitted TAG.

During the external quality assurance process taking place in June or July, our submitted TAGs may be moved up or down (although this will always be done through human agency, not by an algorithm).

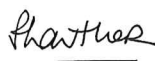
We only know what a student's conditional offer is if they have chosen to share that information with us. It has not formed part of our objective grading of students. Where we do know this information, we must not let students know their submitted TAGs, even if they haven't met the conditions of their offer.

We hope you enjoy the rest of the summer break and we look forward to seeing you in August.

Yours sincerely,



Preit Chahal
Principal



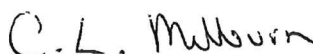
Joanne Lowther
Director of Performance



Peter Snowdon
Senior Lead, Curriculum



Karen Blackburn
Director of Post 16



Carol Milburn
Director Main School



Joint Council for
Qualifications^{CIC}

Guidance for students, parents and guardians:
GCSEs and AS/A Levels in England
Summer 2021

What is this document for, and what will it tell me?

Following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK government has decided that the Summer 2021 examination series will not go ahead as planned. Instead, teachers will determine your grades, based upon a range of evidence verified by your school or college.

These results will then be reviewed by the exam boards who designed each course, before awarding the final grades which reflect your performance on content you have been taught, and allow you to confidently progress to the next stage of your education or into employment.

This JCQ document provides an overview of the most important information that you and your parents or guardians need to know about how grades will be awarded this summer. This includes a timeline of what is happening and when; how teachers, schools and colleges will determine your grades; and when you will receive your results.

JCQ and the exam boards have been working together actively to support teachers, schools and colleges to determine your grades this summer. Your school or college will be setting their own approach for teachers to follow which will be developed in line with guidance from the exam boards, Ofqual and the Department for Education.

You can find more information in our full guidance document, published on the JCQ website [here](#).

What is happening, and when?

March	April	May	June	July	August
<p>End of March</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JCQ Centre Guidance published and sent to exam centres Student and parent guidance published 	<p>12 April to 30 April</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centre Policy submission window 		<p>18 June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deadline for grades to be submitted to Awarding Organisations 		<p>10 August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AS and A Level and relevant Level 3 VTQ results day <p>12 August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GCSE and relevant Level 2 VTQs results day
<p>22 March to 22 April</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entry amendments window open for exam centres 			<p>18 June to 16 July</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awarding organisations complete quality assurance and finalise grades with exam centres 		
	<p>26 April</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private Candidates entry deadline 	<p>26 May to 18 June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher assessed grades submission window via awarding organisations' respective portals 			
		<p>May and June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtual centre visits conducted where Centre Policy indicates further support and guidance may be required. 			

How will I be assessed?

Teachers will initially determine your grades, which will then be reviewed by your school or college. The professional judgement of teachers will only be based on what you have been taught and your teachers will use a range of evidence from across the course of study to make their decision. Teachers can assess you based on:

- Records of your performance on the content you have been taught over the entire course of your studies.
- Non-exam assessment, often referred to as coursework or internal assessments, even if you have not fully completed it.
- Work you have produced in tasks set by your school or college that reflects the specification, format and marking of exam boards. This could include substantial classwork, homework, internal tests or mock exams.
- Schools and colleges also have the option to set tests for you in order to gather further evidence. Teachers can develop these tests or use assessment materials provided by the exam boards. Importantly, these tests are not formal exams, nor are they designed to play the role of exams.

Your teachers do not need to assess you on every aspect of each subject. They just need a range of evidence that shows your performance on the aspects you have been taught.

In most cases, the range of evidence that your teachers use to inform your grade will be consistent across your class or cohort for each qualification. However, your school or college may decide that a different range of evidence may be more appropriate to fairly inform your grade, if, for example, you have missed significantly more teaching than others in your class.

Keeping you in the know

Your teachers will tell you which pieces of work will be used as evidence to inform your overall grade. You will have the opportunity to raise any concerns about the evidence being used, for example, if the evidence was affected by personal circumstances, such as illness. Your teacher will make the final judgement about what evidence is to be included - this is not a negotiation. Your teachers will not be able to tell you the grade they have submitted to the exam board.

How is the evidence used?

No single piece of evidence will necessarily be more important than another, as teachers will be assessing you based on a range of evidence that can give an overall picture of your performance.

Ofqual has issued separate [guidance](#) to schools, colleges and teachers about the submission of teacher assessed grades, including the evidence that can be used.

Determining grades

Once all the evidence is selected and assessments are complete, teachers will decide on an overall grade. They will do this objectively – so, if you are performing consistently at a grade B standard in a subject at A Level, you should be awarded a grade B. Exam boards will provide further advice and guidance to show the standard of work expected for particular grades, including additional grade descriptors, to supplement those previously published by Ofqual.

It is important to say that much like with exams in normal years, the grades issued by teachers, schools and colleges will not take account of your potential. They will be a snapshot of the standard you are performing at based on a wide range of evidence. It should be no easier or harder for you to achieve a grade this year based on your performance than in previous years.

What happens after my teacher determines my grade in a subject?

Once a teacher has determined your grade, it will be reviewed by other teachers in your school or college, so grades are determined consistently with your school or college's policy. Exam boards will check these policies to make sure they meet their requirements.

Reasonable adjustments, access arrangements and special consideration

If you have special educational needs, and/or are disabled, and require reasonable adjustments, your school or college should have ensured that these were in place when evidence was gathered. Where appropriate reasonable adjustments were not in place when you took an assessment that is being used as evidence, your teacher should take that into account when determining your grade. Your school or college could also consider whether other evidence could be used instead.

Special consideration requests will not apply in the usual way this summer because you will not be taking exams. If you think that your performance in an assessment has been affected by illness or personal circumstances, you should talk to your school or college about this as soon as possible. It is important that you raise any such instances before your school or college submits your grade.

If you have any questions about how your personal circumstances will be taken into account or want to raise anything with your school or college, now is the best time to speak to them. You should not wait until after you get your results.

Private Candidates – see separate guidance [here](#).

When will I receive my grades and what happens next?

- AS and A Level students will receive their results on Tuesday 10 August 2021.
- GCSE students will receive their results on Thursday 12 August 2021.

The details on when and where you collect your results will be up to your school or college, and they will contact you with these plans in due course. Their plans will take into account any Covid and social distancing measures which are still in place in August.

Appeals

Although everyone will be working hard to make sure you are issued with the correct grades on results day, there will also be an appeals system as a safety net to fix any genuine errors that were not identified earlier on.

If you believe an error has been made in determining your grade, you will have a right to appeal. There are two stages to the appeals process:

Stage 1: centre review

If you don't think you have been issued with the correct grade, you can appeal to your school or college, who will review whether they:

- made an administrative error, e.g. they submitted an incorrect grade; they used an incorrect assessment mark when determining your grade.
- did not apply a procedure correctly, e.g. they did not follow their Centre Policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or mitigating circumstances, such as illness.

To help you decide whether to appeal, you can request that your school or college shares with you the following information on results day if not before:

- their Centre Policy
- the sources of evidence used to determine your grade along with any grades/marks associated with them
- details of any special circumstances that have been taken into account in determining your grade, e.g. access arrangements, mitigating circumstances such as illness

Stage 2: appeal to the exam board

If you still don't think you have the correct grade after the centre review is complete, you can ask your school or college to appeal to the exam board, who will review whether

- the school or college made an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement¹ in the choice of evidence from which they determined your grade and/or in the determination of your grade from that evidence.

¹ A reasonable judgement is one that is supported by evidence. An exercise of judgement will not be unreasonable simply because a student considers that an alternative grade should have been awarded, even if the student puts forward supporting evidence. There may be a difference of opinion without there being an unreasonable exercise of judgement. The reviewer will not remark individual assessments to make fine judgements but will take a holistic approach based on the overall evidence.

- the school or college did not apply a procedure correctly, e.g. they did not follow their Centre Policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or mitigating circumstances, such as illness.
- the exam board made an administrative error, e.g. they changed your grade during the processing of grades.

At both stages of the process you will need to submit your appeal to your school or college and give them your written consent to conduct the appeal or submit it to the exam board on your behalf. It's important to remember that **your grade can go down, up or stay the same** through either stage of the process.

If you have a place at university that is dependent on your appeal, you should tell the university you are hoping to go to so they can decide how to handle your offer. You should also tell your school or college so they can ask the exam board to prioritise your appeal. The timelines for priority and non-priority appeals will be as follows:

10 August to 7 September: priority appeals window

- » **10 August to 16 August:** student requests centre review
- » **10 August to 20 August:** centre conducts centre review
- » **11 August to 23 August:** centre submits appeal to exam board
- **10 August to end October:** majority of non-priority appeals take place
 - » **10 August to 3 September:** student requests centre review
 - » **10 August to 10 September:** centre conducts centre review
 - » **11 August to 17 September:** centre submits appeal to exam board

Finally, if you believe the exam board has made a procedural error in handling your appeal, you can apply to Ofqual's Exam Procedures Review Service to review the process undertaken by the exam board.

Appeals Process

After results day

Results issued (10/12 August)

1. **Student** asks centre for review because they think there has been an error

Note: Grades can go up, down or stay the same

Centre review: Centre checks for errors and process issues. Centre wants to change grade?

No

Yes

Awarding Organisation checks and issues final grade; may require input from Centre

Centre informs student of outcome

2. If **Student** thinks the error has not been resolved they ask centre for **Awarding Organisation** appeal

Note: Grades can go up, down or stay the same

Centre submits **Awarding Organisation** appeal

Awarding Organisation appeal:
Have processes been followed, is the grade a reasonable exercise of academic judgement?

No

Yes

Awarding Organisation issues final grade; may require input from Centre

Awarding Organisation issues final grade

Centre informs student of outcome

3. If dissatisfied, applications may be made to Ofqual's EPRS (Exam Procedures Review Service)



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