



## The Awarding of Grades 2021 - Frequently Asked Questions and a Guide for Students and Parents to the Appeals Process for the Summer 2021 series

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

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

These grades were then approved by the relevant exam board, following external quality assurance checks.

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 will have the opportunity to appeal their grade if they meet the eligibility criteria (see 'What are the grounds for appeal?' below). However, it is important to note that an appeal may result in a grade being lowered, staying the same, or going up; if a student puts in an appeal and their grade is lowered, they will receive the lower mark.

There is also the option to re-sit GCSEs, A levels and some AS levels in the autumn, which may be preferable to some students. The design, content and assessment of these papers will be the same as in a normal year. Further details can be found under the Autumn Series Exams icon.

### **What are the grounds for appeal?**

There are five main grounds for appeal, as dictated by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). They are:

- 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 given in a certain subject.
- 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.

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.

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 should I do before appealing?**

Students should read the JCQ student guidance for appeals, which will be available on the JCQ website ahead of Results Day on August 12<sup>th</sup> 2021. A copy of the earlier guidance for students, parents and guardians: GCSEs and AS/A Levels in England Summer 2021, released in March, can be found [here](#).

### **What are the 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 requesting this but we will then send the form 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: stage 1 – centre review:**

Following Results Day, if students wish to appeal for a centre review, they should fill in the student request section (A) of the stage one – centre review JCQ form [here](#) and send it to [gcserevents@horizoncc.co.uk](mailto:gcserevents@horizoncc.co.uk)

We will then carry out the centre review, as outlined above, and reply to the student, confirming our findings. We will use the centre review outcome section (B) of the stage one – centre review JCQ form [here](#).

### **How do I make an appeal: stage 2 – awarding organisation appeal:**

Following a centre review, if students wish to appeal to the awarding organisation, they should fill in the stage two – appeal to awarding organisation section of the JCQ form [here](#) and send it to [gcserevents@horizoncc.co.uk](mailto:gcserevents@horizoncc.co.uk). We will then submit this to the awarding organisation and confirm we have done so. We will then share the outcome of the appeal with the student as soon as we receive it.

### **What if I am still concerned that my grade is incorrect after stage one and stage two of the appeals process?**

If, when an awarding organisation appeal (stage 2) is complete, you believe the exam board has not followed its procedures properly, you can decide to take your case further to the Exam Procedures Review Service (EPRS). Not all qualifications are covered by the EPRS so please check the relevant regulator's website ( [Ofqual](#), [CCEA Regulation](#) or [Qualifications Wales](#)) for more information on whether you can apply and, if so, how to apply. (*JCQ - A guide to appeals processes Summer 2021 series*)

### **What is the deadline for appeals?**

'The JCQ deadline for students to request a centre review is 3rd September 2021. However, to ensure we have enough time to process any such requests, these should be made by 4.00pm on Wednesday 1st September.

The deadline for the college to submit an appeal to an awarding organisation is 17th September 2021. Again, to ensure we have enough time to process these, any requests for an appeal should be made by 4.00pm on Tuesday 14th September.'

### **You know my / my child's grades. Why can't you tell us?**

We are forbidden from disclosing the Teacher Assessed Grades to any third party, including students and parents, until Results Day on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> August. 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 and July, our submitted <sup>3</sup> TAGs may be moved up or down (although this will always be done through human agency, not by an algorithm).