

## John Dickens – email search results (FOI2021292)

**From:** Kate Keating  
**Sent:** 05 August 2020 19:03  
**To:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: EMBARGOED NEWS FROM LABOUR: Labour seeks urgent assurances over exams results

Ah great, thanks [REDACTED]!

**From:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 05 August 2020 18:57  
**To:** Kate Keating [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: EMBARGOED NEWS FROM LABOUR: Labour seeks urgent assurances over exams results

Ive made that change.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

gov.uk/dfe | @educationgovuk | fb.com/educationgovuk

Read our media blog [here](#).



**From:** Kate Keating [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 05 August 2020 18:47  
**To:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: EMBARGOED NEWS FROM LABOUR: Labour seeks urgent assurances over exams results

As discussed, our preference (for the reasons explained), k

“Early data published by Ofqual shows ~~the impact of~~ indicates calculated grades has had no impact on the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, and ethnic minorities and their peers, ~~is next to none.~~”

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

Sent: 05 August 2020 17:33

To: Kate Keating <[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>

Cc: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: EMBARGOED NEWS FROM LABOUR: Labour seeks urgent assurances over exams results

Can you live with this?

**A Department for Education spokesperson said:**

“The vast majority of students will receive a calculated grade this summer that enables them to move on to the next stage of their education or training.

“Ofqual has developed a robust process that will take into account a range of evidence, including grades submitted by schools and colleges, with the primary aim of ensuring grades are as fair as possible for all students.

“Early data published by Ofqual shows the impact of calculated grades on the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, and ethnic minorities and their peers, is next to none.”

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Read our media blog [here](#).

From: Kate Keating [redacted]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
Sent: 05 August 2020 14:53  
To: [redacted]@education.gov.uk>  
Subject: FW: EMBARGOED NEWS FROM LABOUR: Labour seeks urgent assurances over exams results  
Importance: High

From: [redacted]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
Sent: 05 August 2020 14:40  
To: [redacted]@ofqual.gov.uk>; [redacted]  
[redacted]@ofqual.gov.uk>; Kate Keating [redacted]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
Subject: FW: EMBARGOED NEWS FROM LABOUR: Labour seeks urgent assurances over exams results  
Importance: High

To see from [redacted] at the Mail – this is becoming politicised.

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@dailymail.co.uk>  
Sent: 05 August 2020 14:38  
To: [redacted]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
Subject: Fwd: EMBARGOED NEWS FROM LABOUR: Labour seeks urgent assurances over exams results

I think this complements my existing query..

Begin forwarded message:

From: [redacted]@dailymail.co.uk>  
Date: 5 August 2020 at 14:04:21 BST  
To: [redacted]@dailymail.co.uk>

**Subject: FW: EMBARGOED NEWS FROM LABOUR: Labour seeks urgent assurances over exams results**

**From:** Labour Party Press Office <[press@labour.org.uk](mailto:press@labour.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 05 August 2020 14:03

**To:** Labour Party Press Office <[press@labour.org.uk](mailto:press@labour.org.uk)>

**Subject:** EMBARGOED NEWS FROM LABOUR: Labour seeks urgent assurances over exams results

External Sender

**\*\*\*EMBARGOED until 2230hrs Wednesday 5 August\*\*\***

## **Labour seeks urgent assurances over exams results**

**Kate Green MP, Labour's Shadow Education Secretary**, has today written to Gavin Williamson, the Education Secretary, to demand urgent clarifications for parents and children who are worried that their exam results will not be reflective of the hard work they have put into their education but instead set by a computer algorithm based on their schools' prior attainment.

In a letter sent to the Education Secretary earlier, Kate Green called on the Government to ensure that inequalities in the education system are not further entrenched by the standardisation methodology being used which "will draw on the historical outcomes of a centre" and that pupils do not have their life chances negatively impacted.

This comes following analysis of Scottish Higher results which showed that the standardisation model used by the Scottish Qualifications Authority led to children from disadvantaged backgrounds having their results reduced at more than double the level of their more affluent peers.

Labour's Shadow Education Secretary also demanded the Government provide a fair and accessible system for appeals, ensuring students get the requisite support to navigate the process.

Labour has previously called on the Government in July to ensure that this year's assessments are fair, accessible, and accountable. The Party has also warned the Government in response to the Education Select Committee report on calculated grades that they must urgently act to

ensure that young people from ethnic minority and disadvantaged backgrounds do not lose out under this system.

**Kate Green MP, Labour’s Shadow Education Secretary, said:**

“Yesterday’s disastrous handling of Highers results in Scotland shows what can go wrong when computer algorithms drive students’ grades, and politicians wash their hands of responsibility.

“With A-level results just over a week away, and GCSE results due the week after, it’s imperative the Government acts now to reassure worried students, teachers and parents. Young people deserve to have their hard work assessed on merit, but the system risks baking in inequality and doing most harm to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, those from Ethnic Minority groups and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

“Ministers must urgently set out how they’ll ensure the results next week will not exacerbate existing inequalities, and what extra support they’ll give to students who feel they’ve been unfairly graded to navigate the appeals process.”

Ends

**Notes to Editors:**

- Letter from Kate Green to the Secretary of State for Education:

Dear Gavin

I am writing to you to seek urgent assurances ahead of upcoming results days in England over the next two weeks that the process will treat students fairly. Yesterday’s Higher results in Scotland, which saw nearly a quarter of all the recommended results for school pupils this year downgraded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, show all too clearly the challenges of a teacher assessment and standardisation approach. The experience in Scotland is now impacting on teacher and student confidence ahead of next week’s A level results, and GCSE results the following week. I hope you will act to address this as a matter of urgency.

The first issue of concern is the potentially disproportionate event impact on different demographics. Analysis of the comparison between teacher estimates and the statistical moderation used to calculate the Scottish results has shown a reduction of 15.2 per cent in the most deprived communities, compared to just 6.9 per cent in the most affluent areas – entrenching inequality for those from the poorest backgrounds and areas.

All students deserve to receive grades on their own merit and not a computer algorithm. It is therefore vital that students, teachers and parents understand the way in which results will primarily be determined, and how a balance is to be achieved between performance at centre level and consideration of students’ individual performance.

If the eventual results are determined primarily at centre level, there is a significant danger that inequality will be baked into the system, as students will be judged on their schools' prior attainment and not on individual merit. This was confirmed last month by Ofqual who said "standardisation will draw on the historical outcomes of a centre". So what protections are the Government putting in place to ensure the attainment gap doesn't continue to grow this year? What steps will be taken to address unequal outcomes for students from Black and Ethnic Minority backgrounds, those on free school meals and other groups who are likely to be disadvantaged by this methodology?

The centre level standardisation model negatively impacts on improving schools. The trajectory of a school's recent performance will not be taken account, but this will significantly penalise fast-improving schools – so what measures are you implementing to ensure that their turnaround is recognised?

Second, there remain serious concerns about the appeals process. Should large numbers of results be downgraded or assessed at a level lower than a student was predicted due to the standardisation model, what support will they be given for a fair and accessible process of appeals? Students will be concerned and upset should they receive results lower than they are expecting and will need access to expert advice to navigate this process. They will need to be able to identify process failures by the centres, and will particularly struggle to evidence bias. It is of concern that centres have not been required to make a specific equalities statement, and that they have received only a 'reminder' of their duties under equalities law, and 'suggestions' about how they might use data from previous years to indicate any systematic tendency to under or over predict likely performance that is associated with students' particular protected characteristics.

Could you therefore confirm what resources government will make to support students who wish to access the appeals process? And what reassurance can you give to students, schools and families that the process will be transparent and address inherent bias in the system, particularly for Black and Minority Ethnic students, but also those on free school meals, looked after children, and those with SEND?

We know that young people have gone through considerable challenges over the past few months and their education has been severely disrupted. This year's system of assessment risks creating winners and losers, and some children in schools that have been improving are those who could lose out the most. To ensure that no young person's life chances are further impacted by coronavirus, should providers of post-16 and post-18 education be flexible when making offers and decisions affecting these young people, so they do not lose out due to factors far beyond their control?

Nicola Sturgeon has failed a generation of young Scots by ensuring that the inequality and attainment gap has been further entrenched through her failure to act on the injustice of the moderation system. We cannot allow that to happen here in England next week.

I therefore seek your urgent reassurance that you and your Government will not allow similar results to occur in England and that students and their families can be confident of getting the results their time and hard work deserve.

Yours sincerely  
Kate Green MP  
Shadow Education Secretary

- Thousands of Scottish school pupils have received worse results than they had been expecting after the country's exam body lowered 125,000 estimated grades - a quarter of the total.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-53636296>
- Ofqual confirmed "standardisation will draw on the historical outcomes of a centre" <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/oxford-to-accept-star-pupils-from-poor-schools-qzm8k6gtj>
- Labour has called on the Government to ensure that this year's assessments are fair, accessible, and accountable and warned Government in response to the Education Select Committee report on calculated grades that they must urgently act to ensure that young people from ethnic minority and disadvantaged backgrounds do not lose out under this system. <https://labour.org.uk/press/calculated-grades-system-risks-inaccuracy-and-bias-against-disadvantaged-groups-kate-green-responds/>
- Government guidance on standardising exam results this year.  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/902736/Standardising\\_grades\\_in\\_summerx\\_2020\\_-\\_factsheet\\_-\\_20200721\\_1529.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/902736/Standardising_grades_in_summerx_2020_-_factsheet_-_20200721_1529.pdf)

Sent by email from the Labour Party. Promoted by the Labour Party at Southside, 105 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QT.

Website: <https://www.labour.org.uk>.

To join or renew call [0345 092 2299](tel:03450922299).

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**From:** [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 05 August 2020 20:57  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Richard Garrett [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Draft letter to ESC - initial response to recommendations - for sign off.docx

Hi Jacquie

As promised final version of ESC letter now approved by Sally and Roger. We plan to send this tomorrow – alongside the normal email that we send to [REDACTED] signposting our publications.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

***ATTACHMENT FOR EMAIL DATED 5 August 2020, 20:57 IS SHOWN BELOW.*** The final published document attached to this email can be found here:  
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmeduc/812/81204.htm>

Dear Mr Halfon

Ahead of our full response to your Committee's report *Getting the grades they've earned Covid-19: the cancellation of exams and 'calculated' grades*, which we will send in September after this year's results are issued, I am writing to update you on progress towards the release of results for GCSEs, AS and A levels, vocational, technical and other general qualifications.

**Transparency**

We published on 21 July [a package of information](#) setting how results are being produced this year and early indications of how the overall results are likely to look.

We also presented this information at our virtual summer symposium on the same day attended by some 150 people from a range of organisations across the sector, during which we took the opportunity to thank teachers for their hard work and professionalism in making this year's exceptional arrangements work.

We understand and agree with your Committee's calls for transparency about the statistical standardisation model used for GCSEs, AS and A levels. We explained, following consultation, the principles that would underpin the model and as soon as we were able following finalisation of the model provided [additional details](#) about how it works so that everyone with an interest in this year's arrangements can understand the approach that has been taken. We do not believe it would be appropriate to publish the complete statistical methodology until A level results days because this might lead to disclosure of results ahead of time, or result in students believing incorrectly they know what their results are ahead of time.

We were able to provide assurance at our symposium that national results will be similar to last year - in line with the Secretary of State's [Direction](#) to us that, as far as is possible, qualification standards are maintained. The results will be slightly higher than last year because, where there was an option, we decided when finalising the model to err on the side of leniency, in favour of students, for example historical data used in the model is based on previous years' results after any reviews of marking or appeals. We anticipate an average increase of approximately 2% at A level and around 1% at GCSE when compared with 2019 results. Our analysis shows that the vast majority of final calculated grades will be either the same or no more than one grade different from centre assessment grades, showing the care and professionalism exercised by teachers. Understandably, overall schools and colleges have been more generous in their centre assessment grades than would be indicated by prior performance. Through the standardisation model we will ensure that the value of GCSEs, AS and A level grades is protected.

Along with the Committee and others we have been particularly concerned to ensure the arrangements for results this year do not exacerbate the attainment gaps between different groups of students seen in a normal year when exams have taken place. We were pleased to be able to confirm on 21 July that our initial analyses of GCSE, AS and A level outcomes is reassuring and suggests there will generally be no widening of the gaps in attainment between different groups of students,

We published information about this [here](#).

Unlike GCSEs, AS and A levels, there is no overarching statistical standardisation model for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and other general qualifications. To cater for the breadth of the VTQ landscape, we have designed our [extraordinary regulatory framework](#) to allow awarding organisations flexibility to determine the most suitable approach for their qualifications. This has been operationalised by 147 awarding organisations for just over 15,000 qualifications. In all cases, awarding organisations are responsible for designing assessment models, within the framework of our rules that allow assessments to be made in the most fair and valid way for the qualification type.

Different approaches to calculating results have been taken depending on the evidence available and the nature and structure of a qualification. Whichever approach taken, awarding organisations have:

- gathered evidence such as previously banked assessment results, centre assessment grades and school/college results from previous years
- quality-assured the evidence that is to be relied upon
- ensured the outcomes are not out of line with expectations

We have engaged directly with awarding organisations, and facilitated consistency where possible through working groups focusing on approaches to calculated grades for sector areas or qualification types (for example Functional Skills, Applied Generals). Using a risk-based approach, we have monitored awarding organisations particularly closely for over 1000 qualifications with the highest stakes and highest volume uptake. We anticipate that where the entry has remained similar, outcomes should remain broadly in line with previous years.

As we explained at our appearance, we are committed to evaluating this year's arrangements and will be publishing further information alongside and after results are issued.

## **Information for students**

As part of our commitment to support students during this difficult year, we published a [guide for students](#) on 27 July. We are providing full training for colleagues who will staff our helpline in the run up to, on and after results days to take calls. We are also supporting the preparation of the careers advisers who will staff the government's national Exam Results Helpline. This will provide greater capacity to respond to queries from students and their parents or carers as advisors will receive the detailed

briefing information and training received by Ofqual staff. The Ofqual helpline is charged at standard network rate and the Exam Results Helpline is a freephone number.

Today, we have published more information for students if they have concerns about bias, discrimination or any other factor that suggests their school or college did not behave with care or integrity when determining their centre assessment grade or rank order information. We have provided this information to help students understand whether they might have a reason to make a complaint about malpractice or maladministration, including if they have concerns about bias or discrimination. The document includes examples to help students consider whether they might have evidence. As well as contacting our helpline or that provided by the Exam Results Helpline to discuss these issues, students could also choose to contact the Equality Advisory Support Service for advice if they think they have evidence of discrimination.

Your report also calls for publication of the timetable for the Autumn series. JCQ has confirmed that

- AS and A level exams will start on Monday 5 October and finish on Friday 23 October (entry deadline 4 September) and results will be provided by Christmas
- GCSE exams will start on Monday 2 November and finish on Monday 23 November (entry deadline for all subjects except English and maths 18 September; entry deadline for English and maths 4 October) and results will be provided by February.

For vocational and technical qualifications and other general qualifications, we require awarding organisations that normally provide an autumn assessment opportunity to take all reasonable steps to continue to provide this.

Where awarding organisations do not normally offer an autumn assessment opportunity, we have asked them to do so where there are students who need one, unless it would be impractical or create a disproportionate burden. We expect awarding organisations to work with centres, and to take decisions in the best interests of students. We have safeguards in place for us to intervene if we decide there is a particular need for an assessment that is not being met by awarding organisations. We also require awarding organisations to ensure that their approach to delivering these assessments minimises burdens and is as deliverable as possible, including by centres and teachers.

We are updating our [interactive tool](#) to include information about when the next available assessment opportunity will be for particular qualifications. The updated version will be available for use by centres, students, parents and all other interested parties by 7 August 2020.

Our consultation on proposed GCSE, AS and A levels exam and assessment arrangements in 2021 attracted almost 29,000 responses. On 3 August, we [published](#) a summary of the responses and our decisions for each subject.

We also published a [consultation](#) on assessment of VTQs in 2020/21 on 3 August. Our proposals include a requirement for awarding organisations to consider whether they should make adaptations to their assessments and qualifications to mitigate the impact of disruptions to teaching, learning and assessment. We will engage with awarding organisations during August on approaches for 2021 for different types of VTQs, and we anticipate publishing a further consultation later in the month.

I trust this information provides you with assurance that we take seriously your recommendations and have made considerable progress in responding to many of them. We will provide a full response to all of your recommendations in September.

**From:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED] [@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 05 August 2020 21:36  
**To:** [REDACTED] [@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** Richard Garrett [REDACTED] [@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Julie Swan [REDACTED] [@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Kate Keating [REDACTED] [@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft letter to ESC - initial response to recommendations - for sign off.docx

Hi [REDACTED] – thanks for sharing this. It looks good – I just had one very minor drafting suggestion shown in the attached.

My more substantive question is why you aren't mentioning the publication of the final appeals guidance here, but only the student guide? I know you don't want to over-egg it but given the current concern over the outliers issue would it not be sensible to flag here the publication of the guidance, even if you don't want to go into any details about what's in it?

Copying to Julie and Kate given that I'm in parallel discussions with them about the appeals stuff.

Jacquie

***ATTACHMENT FOR EMAIL DATED 5 August  
2020, 21:36 IS SHOWN BELOW:***

Dear Mr Halfon

Ahead of our full response to your Committee's report *Getting the grades they've earned Covid-19: the cancellation of exams and 'calculated' grades*, which we will send in September after this year's results are issued, I am writing to update you on

progress towards the release of results for GCSEs, AS and A levels, vocational, technical and other general qualifications.

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between different groups of students seen in a normal year when exams have taken place. We were pleased to be able to confirm on 21 July that our initial analyses of GCSE, AS and A level outcomes is reassuring and suggests there will generally be no widening of the gaps in attainment between different groups of students,

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We also require awarding organisations to ensure that their approach to delivering these assessments minimises burdens and is as deliverable as possible, including by centres and teachers.

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I trust this information provides you with assurance that we take seriously your recommendations and have made considerable progress in responding to many of them. We will provide a full response to all of your recommendations in September.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 06 August 2020 08:52  
**To:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Dear Colleagues conference

Good morning [REDACTED],

I have heard from the team and they have no comments.

Many thanks

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 06 August 2020 09:06  
**To:** [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Dear Colleagues conference

Thanks [REDACTED], that's very helpful.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

  
Department  
for Education

**From:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 06 August 2020 09:51  
**To:** Kate Keating [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Appeals words  
**Importance:** High

Kate – draft SoS quote below and new paras for op-ed below that. If you can see tiny tweaks that make your life easier, let me know. Sharing with you in parallel with SpAds given urgency.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

“Grades this year will do for the vast majority of students what they do every year, opening the door to their next step whether that’s university, college, an apprenticeship or the world of work.

“It is vital though that we have an appeals process that makes sure students with exceptional circumstances are not held back by the way grades have been calculated – including those who are highly talented in schools that have not in the past had strong results, or where schools have undergone significant changes such as a new leadership team.

“We have been working closely with Ofqual to make sure that’s the case, and I’m confident the process announced today will help even more young people use these results as the springboard to the next stage in their lives.”

We have also been working closely with Ofqual on an appeals process, the details of which were announced this Thursday. It will help those minority of students with exceptional circumstances, and ensure they are not held back by the grading model we have. A group that **will might** particularly benefit from this are highly talented pupils in schools that have had poor results in the past.

The need for an appeals mechanism of this kind has been brought sharply into focus following what happened in Scotland earlier in the week. It is essential that we do not let down our most talented children from disadvantaged backgrounds. We expect the vast majority of grades to be accurate, but it is essential that we have this safety net for young people who may otherwise have been held back from that all-important place at college or university.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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Read our media blog [here](#).



**From:** Kate Keating [REDACTED] [\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** 06 August 2020 10:07

**To:** [REDACTED] [\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED] [\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: Appeals words

One change, which colleagues (partic lawyers) felt was **really** important was to change will to might (as below)

That okay?

**From:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 06 August 2020 11:08  
**To:** Kate Keating [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Appeals words

That's fine and thank you!

Updated line below – main change is bottom para. Hopefully on the right side of subjective...

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

“Grades this year will do for the vast majority of students what they do every year, opening the door to their next step whether that’s college, university, an apprenticeship or the world of work.

“The process has been made as fair as possible. It is vital though that we have an appeals process that makes sure students with exceptional circumstances are not held back by the way grades have been calculated – including those who are highly talented in schools that have not in the past had strong results, or where schools have undergone significant changes such as a new leadership team.

“I therefore welcome the appeals process announced by Ofqual today, which will ensure that every student can get a fair grade that reflects their ability.”

Further information

Ofqual’s appeals guidance states: ‘Where a Centre experienced a governance, organisational or leadership change during the relevant period and there is evidence of improved GCSE, AS or A level results at the Centre after that change, which indicates that exam performance at the Centre in the year(s) before the change might not be the most appropriate basis to reliably inform the calculation of results.’

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
gov.uk/dfe | @educationgovuk | fb.com/educationgovuk

Read our media blog [here](#).



From: SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>  
Sent: 05 August 2020 22:29  
To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@jcq.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@jcq.org.uk)>  
Cc: 'Julie Swan' [REDACTED] <[julie.swan@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:julie.swan@[REDACTED])>  
Subject: Appeals

Hi [REDACTED] – we spoke this morning about the work the exam boards were doing to prepare to approach centres that they thought would have grounds to appeal under the new para 31d of the Ofqual guidance.

When we discussed this issue with the Minister earlier today he was very pleased that Ofqual had (with the boards' support) managed to find a way of enabling appeals in relation to this group of students. He's concerned however that the centres with affected students may not realise they have grounds for appeal (especially since they will mostly be relatively low performing centres) and that the students may lose out as a result. He's also concerned – as I know we all are – about the immediate impact on the individual students affected and keen that we do everything possible to ensure that these students are told by their centres when they pick up their results that there is going to be an appeal.

He is after some assurance on this so I was wondering if you could tell me a bit more about what the boards have in mind, and in particular:

- Roughly how many centres you anticipate are affected
- Whether the boards plan to contact them all (and if not, why not)
- When that contact will happen – I told him I hoped next Wednesday, so that the centres were prepared for when they gave students their results on Thursday
- How it will happen – eg by phone call or email – and whether the boards have sufficient resource to do this in the time available
- Whether the boards will actively encourage centres, if they are planning to appeal, to let student whose grades look wrong know that when they receive their results

I'd really appreciate a response tomorrow if possible, even some details are unclear at this point.

Many thanks

Jacquie

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## THE EMAIL BELOW WAS SENT BY THE JOINT COUNCIL FOR QUALIFICATIONS ON BEHALF OF ITS MEMBERS

From: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@jcq.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@jcq.org.uk)>

Sent: 06 August 2020 12:36

To: Jacquie.SPATCER [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>

Cc: Julie Swan [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Appeals

Dear Jacquie,

The Responsible Officers discussed the questions below and asked me to follow up to reassure you and the Minister that the 'outlier' candidates affected by the model are firmly in the minds of the exam boards and they are doing everything possible to support them.

In relation to your questions, the key will be the work of the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to inform the scenarios and type of evidence required – consideration also has to be given to the resolutions where genuine cases are identified. We do think that a further meeting of the TAP this week would be helpful and the priority should be on case studies and scenarios for types of appeal that could come this route. While we need to support those students affected, we have to ensure the cases are genuine.

In terms of the questions, I can respond as follows:

- The Boards can't identify the exact number of centres/subjects affected until the TAP provides some indication of scenarios for evidence.
- The Boards are already planning to contact centres, mostly by phone, on the Wednesday where outcomes look particularly anomalous considering distribution of results – this will apply to more than just the high-performing candidate in an historically mediocre centre
  - The approach taken will be to say the Board 'is aware the centre's results may look surprising to them and that we are available to talk to them should they want to appeal so we can guide them through the process'
- So, wherever the Board feels there is a real issue – and considering any guidance through the work of TAP – centres' options of appeal will be highlighted

We are also cognisant of the need to process appeals that are critical for candidates' progression as quickly as possible. It is also important the HEIs keep open offers until the agreed deadline for appeals on 7<sup>th</sup> September – this is an on-going arrangement that they are meant to honour.

I want to emphasise that the Responsible Officers want to do their best to ensure everyone receives as fair results as possible in this exceptional year, but it is also important that appeals and considerations do not undermine the confidence in and credibility of the model.

We hope any announcements or comments by the SoS about changes to the appeals process, does not set unreasonable expectations that everyone will be able to successfully appeal their result and he highlights that these will be rare and exceptional cases.

Regards,

■

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 Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.

**From:** SPATCHER, Jacquie ■ [@education.gov.uk](mailto:■@education.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** 09 August 2020 14:57

**To:** Cath Jadhav ■ [@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:■@ofqual.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** Michelle Meadows ■ [@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:■@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Julie Swan

■ [@education.gov.uk](mailto:■@education.gov.uk)>; ■

■ [@education.gov.uk](mailto:■@education.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** Data questions

Hi Cath. ■ and I have put our heads together and put together a list of questions about the data you'll be publishing this week which is attached. Some of this is asking if we can see specific stats now if you have them; some is broader questions about what you do and don't plan to publish. I'd be really grateful for a response as soon as you can – if some questions are

easier to answer than others we're happy to get the answers in dribs and drabs.

I'm going to try to flush our with comms colleagues and spads colleagues tomorrow what specific questions they think either that the media will ask, or that Ministers are likely to want to refer to. Will let you know asap if that leads to further questions.

Many thanks in anticipation...

Jacque

**From:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** 09 August 2020 15:57

**To:** SPATCHER, Jacque [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** Michelle Meadows [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Julie Swan

[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: Data questions

Hi Jacque

This is really helpful – thanks. I think we've done most of what's there (although not necessarily for AS, given the small numbers) but there are a few that we can think about. In terms of what we're publishing, that's not yet fixed. We've got a meeting tomorrow morning to discuss, and then I'll get back to you. Does that work?

Cath

**From:** SPATCHER, Jacque [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** 09 August 2020 16:03

**To:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** Michelle Meadows [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Julie Swan

[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: Data questions

Thanks Cath – yes, I think that works although if you were able to provide the headline stats on overall outcomes and CAGs v grades today/first thing tomorrow (at least for A level), that would be really helpful.

Jacquie

**From:** Cath Jadhav

**Sent:** 09 August 2020 16:30

**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

**Cc:** Michelle Meadows [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; Julie Swan

[REDACTED]@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

**Subject:** RE: Data questions

We can provide that today but I'm just checking with [REDACTED] to make sure I send you the final version (we had the JCQ data on Friday).

Cath

## ***ATTACHMENTS FOR EMAIL DATED 09 August 2020, 14:57 IS SHOWN BELOW:***

### **Questions for Ofqual: A/AS levels**

#### Overall outcomes

- What are the final figures re the change in outcomes between 2019 and 2020 (taking all subjects together) at A\*, A\*-A, A\*-B and A\*E? If you can give us all grades, that would be helpful.

#### CAGs v calculated grades

- Can you tell us, for A and AS level separately:
  - What %/number of all final grades are different from CAGs?
  - What %/number of all final grades are lower than CAGs, and what % are higher?
  - What %/number of all final grades have been lowered (v CAGs) by:
    - One grade
    - Two grades
    - Three grades
    - Four grades
    - Five grades
  - What %/number of final grades have been increased (v CAGs) by:
    - One grade
    - Two grades

- Three grades
- Four grades
- Five grades
- Will the data above be published on results day?
- What's the worst case that we can expect to be picked up by the media – eg are there Cs downgraded to Us, or A\*s to Cs?
- Do you have, and do you intend to publish, data on what % of students have had all/some/no CAGs changed? We think MATs may crunch and publish data.
- Are you anticipating publishing data on CAGs v final grades by centre type? If so can we see it please?
- Are you anticipating publishing the data by subject? If so – again, can we see it please?
- Leaving aside the separate discussion socio-economic status, are you planning to publish any other breakdowns of this data?

### Equalities

- Do you plan to publish the same breakdowns of attainment gaps at A level that you published in the symposium material?
- Will you publish the same breakdowns for AS level – and if so, are they also reassuring?
- Are you considering publishing additional equalities breakdown – and if so, what? (NB some concern this end that even if the overall picture is reassuring, if you publish lots of material – eg a breakdown by subject – there is bound to be something in there that the media can find to criticise)

### Other breakdowns of outcomes v 2019

- Are you considering publishing any other breakdowns of outcomes this year v 2019 – eg centre type or region? If so, what? Can we see the data?

### Entries

- Are you able to share the final entries data ahead of us getting it from JCQ? If not, can you give us a heads up any subjects where there has been a significant shift since the provisional data?

### Private candidates

- I know you can't say definitively how many private candidates weren't able to get a grade, but what will you say if asked this by the media? Do you have a broad estimate that you can use publicly? Can you say how many private candidates did get a grade, compared to last year?

### Combinations of grades

- Can you tell us how many students will get at least 3 A\*s at A level, and how that compares to last year? Will you publish this (or will it be possible to work out from your analytics)?

From: Cath Jadhav

Sent: 09 August 2020 17:23

To: SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

██████████@education.gov.uk>; ██████████@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Michelle Meadows ██████████@ofqual.gov.uk>; Julie Swan  
██████████@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>  
**Subject:** OFFICIAL SENSITIVE - Data questions

Jacquie

Attached is a summary of our analyses of small cohorts by subject for A level and AS (currently in the draft technical report for A level and an annex for AS), Please see attached and the note below from ██████████. I'll forward the pw separately. I'm sorry these aren't the completely final figures but I'd forgotten that JCQ agreed to provide the data early on the agreement that we did not share outside Ofqual. As ██████████ says, where there are differences, they are no larger than 0.2 and there is always the chance that the JCQ figures on Tuesday might vary a little from what we had.

I think the spreadsheets are fairly self-explanatory but let me know if you have any questions.

Cath

**From:** ██████████  
**Sent:** 09 August 2020 17:15  
**To:** Cath Jadhav ██████████@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Data questions

Attached are our provisional outcomes compared to 2019 for AS and A level (all candS in England). I've cross-checked the overall outcomes against the JCQ prov figures and they are all within 0.2% of one another. I haven't looked at individual subjects – worth noting though that our outcomes are at the individual subject level and JCQ will group by JCQ subject group so will be less fine grained.

Also attached are the adjustments to CAGs by subject and overall – again AS and A level. In terms of publishing I think the intention was to just publish the overall figures for AS and A level, unless things have moved on (I'm not sure if anyone has read the results section of the technical report yet, apart from me who wrote it!)...

I've put the JCQ pw on all of these and put a note on the top of the outcomes that the figures are provisional and may not align with the JCQ published figures...

██████████

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 10 August 2020 12:28  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED]@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** FW: Data questions

Jacquie

Attached is a summary of our analyses of small cohorts by subject for A level and AS (currently in the draft technical report for A level and an annex for AS), and the matched outcomes v prediction at subject level (also currently in the technical report for A level and annexed for AS). The maths v further maths grade comparison we discussed last week is also attached (updated to just include candidates taking both in 2019 or 2020). Note we've only included the percentages in blue in the technical report.

I'll forward other stuff as and when it is ready, but any questions let me know. And just to note the technical report is still a draft so things might change...

Thanks.

**From:** Cath Jadhav  
**Sent:** 10 August 2020 12:01  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Michelle Meadows [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; Julie Swan  
[REDACTED]@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Data questions

Hi Jacquie

I've added some responses in red to your questions in the attached. Most of what you were asking was already on our list, but that doesn't necessarily mean we've

finished the analysis! But [REDACTED] will drip feed what we've got once it's ready – same pw as yesterday.

Thanks

Cath

**From:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 09 August 2020 14:57

**To:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>

**Cc:** Michelle Meadows [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; Julie Swan

[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Data questions

Hi Cath. [REDACTED] and I have put our heads together and put together a list of questions about the data you'll be publishing this week which is attached. Some of this is asking if we can see specific stats now if you have them; some is broader questions about what you do and don't plan to publish. I'd be really grateful for a response as soon as you can – if some questions are easier to answer than others we're happy to get the answers in dribs and drabs.

I'm going to try to flush our with comms colleagues and spads colleagues tomorrow what specific questions they think either that the media will ask, or that Ministers are likely to want to refer to. Will let you know asap if that leads to further questions.

Many thanks in anticipation...

Jacquie

# **ATTACHMENT FOR EMAIL DATED 10 August 2020, 12:01 IS SHOWN BELOW:**

## **Questions for Ofqual: A/AS levels**

### Overall outcomes

- What are the final figures re the change in outcomes between 2019 and 2020 (taking all subjects together) at A\*, A\*-A, A\*-B and A\*E? If you can give us all grades, that would be helpful. **Overall the JCQ figures are pretty much as we'd calculated based on the earlier data – or within 0.2% of what we had at each grade – we sent across yesterday.**

### CAGs v calculated grades

- Can you tell us, for A and AS level separately: **We shared this yesterday for AS and A level (overall and by subject). The technical report has the % unadjusted, % adjusted up/down by 1, 2 or 3+ grades currently (still in draft, Sally reviewing).**
  - What %/number of all final grades are different from CAGs?
  - What %/number of all final grades are lower than CAGs, and what % are higher?
  - What %/number of all final grades have been lowered (v CAGs) by:
    - One grade
    - Two grades
    - Three grades
    - Four grades
    - Five grades
  - What %/number of final grades have been increased (v CAGs) by:
    - One grade
    - Two grades
    - Three grades
    - Four grades
    - Five grades
  - Will the data above be published on results day? **Yes**
  - What's the worst case that we can expect to be picked up by the media – eg are there Cs downgraded to Us, or A\*s to Cs? **We're currently looking at this and will share when we have it**
  - Do you have, and do you intend to publish, data on what % of students have had all/some/no CAGs changed? We think MATs may crunch and publish data. **We can do this but it's currently lower down our priority list than some other urgent stuff.**
  - Are you anticipating publishing data on CAGs v final grades by centre type? If so can we see it please? **No – currently we just have final outcomes v 2019 by centre type**
  - Are you anticipating publishing the data by subject? If so – again, can we see it please? **We're not intending to publish the adjustments to CAGs by subject – currently we have the small cohort outcomes by subject and some subject outcomes/matched outcomes v predictions for the more lenient subjects, but that is all.**
  - Leaving aside the separate discussion socio-economic status, are you planning to publish any other breakdowns of this data? **The technical report currently has something on student grade profiles stuff and maths v further maths stuff.**

- Centres with CAGs that are implausible high – I've added this on because we discussed last week, and re your email this morning

### Equalities

- Do you plan to publish the same breakdowns of attainment gaps at A level that you published in the symposium material? Yes, and a bit more, but it is reassuringly boring
- Will you publish the same breakdowns for AS level – and if so, are they also reassuring? Yes, and yes!
- Are you considering publishing additional equalities breakdown – and if so, what? (NB some concern this end that even if the overall picture is reassuring, if you publish lots of material – eg a breakdown by subject – there is bound to be something in there that the media can find to criticise) We'll try to send you that chapter of the technical report as soon as we can. We also agreed this morning that we'll prepare a separate annex with our version of 'the Scottish table' of adjustments by SES, but we will also explain why this is not a sensible way to analyse the data

### Other breakdowns of outcomes v 2019

- Are you considering publishing any other breakdowns of outcomes this year v 2019 – eg centre type or region? If so, what? Can we see the data? I think the technical report has centre type and region at the moment
- Entries
- Are you able to share the final entries data ahead of us getting it from JCQ? If not, can you give us a heads up any subjects where there has been a significant shift since the provisional data? We have the JCQ data...

### Private candidates

- I know you can't say definitively how many private candidates weren't able to get a grade, but what will you say if asked this by the media? Do you have a broad estimate that you can use publicly? Can you say how many private candidates did get a grade, compared to last year? Sounds like JCQ have data on this.

### Combinations of grades

- Can you tell us how many students will get at least 3 A\*s at A level, and how that compares to last year? Will you publish this (or will it be possible to work out from your analytics)? This is in the grade profile stuff (currently as a % compared to previous years – it's the same as 2019 for 3 x A\*).

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 10 August 2020 13:26  
**To:** 'SPATCHER, Jacquie' [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED]@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Data questions

Also attached is the analysis of grade profiles (similar to what we discussed last week). The wording isn't exactly what will go in the report but hopefully it gives you the gist.

Thanks.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 10 August 2020 20:37  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED]@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Data questions

Attached are the biggest adjustments from CAGs to final grades at AS and A level (both up and down). This includes anything that was adjusted by 3 or more grades.

The other spreadsheet shows the changes for individual students (ie how many students had some, all or no changes to CAGs) - with a further breakdown showing which direction the changes were in.

We don't have any plans to publish either of these currently.

Any queries please let me know.

Thanks.

**From:** Cath Jadhav  
**Sent:** 10 August 2020 14:31  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Michelle Meadows [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; Julie Swan

██████████@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; Sally Collier ██████████@ofqual.gov.uk>; Kate Keating  
██████████@ofqual.gov.uk>

Subject: Centres with A or above CAGs.xlsx

Jacquie

Attached is an anonymised list of centres where they have submitted A or A\* for all students in all subjects this summer. The 'proportion' columns are proportion of 1, so 1 is 100% and 0.16 is 16% (for speed, I've not had it re-done). Some of these might be legitimate and some not – we can't draw conclusions at the moment. Also, many have only 1 entry this year, so perhaps less implausible in that context.

This is obviously a very high bar (all students/all subjects) and doesn't cover the example that Sally mentioned which was only in the three sciences (Michelle is going to dig out that example). Looking for all those centres will take a bit longer and there are other bits of analysis that we need to prioritise because they are critical to our technical report. But we'll get onto that as soon as we can.

Do give me a call if you have any questions on the attached.

Cath

***ATTACHMENT (EXCEL SPREADSHEET) FOR  
EMAIL DATED 10 August 2020, 14:31 IS  
SHOWN BELOW:***

Copy of Centres with A or above CAGs.xlsx [Protected View] - Excel

File Home Insert Draw Page Layout Formulas Data Review View Help Acrobat Tell me what you want to do

PROTECTED VIEW Be careful—email attachments can contain viruses. Unless you need to edit, it's safer to stay in Protected View.

E1 Prop A/A\* 2019

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	Centre_Type	Total entry 2020	Prop A/A* 2020	Total entry 2019	Prop A/A* 2019								
2	Secondary comp	1	1	20	0.05								
3	Secondary comp	1	1	44	0.20								
4	Independent	2	1	1	0.00								
5	Independent	10	1	2	0.00								
6	Independent	1	1	8	0.75								
7	Independent	1	1	2	0.50								
8	FE	1	1	172	0.17								
9	FE	1	1	89	0.04								
10	Other	1	1	2	0.00								
11	Other	8	1	15	0.67								
12	Other	12	1	14	0.93								
13	Other	15	1	20	0.70								
14	Other	1	1	31	0.16								
15	Other	9	1	19	0.16								
16	Other	2	1	3	0.00								
17	Other	2	1	4	0.00								
18	Other	1	1	2	0.00								
19	Other	3	1	5	0.20								
20	Other	1	1	10	0.30								
21	Other	2	1	4	0.00								
22	Other	4	1	9	0.00								
23	Other	6	1	16	0.25								
24	Other	1	1	1	0.00								
25	Academy	2	1	3	0.67								
26	Academy	3	1	6	0.00								
27													

**From:** [redacted]@education.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 11 August 2020 15:04  
**To:** Cath Jadhav [redacted]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** [redacted]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Ofqual's technical report

Hi Cath and [redacted]

Sorry to be bothering you, but do have an ETA for your technical report?

Best wishes

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[REDACTED]

Web: [www.gov.uk/dfe](http://www.gov.uk/dfe)  
Twitter: [@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/educationgovuk](https://www.facebook.com/educationgovuk)



Department  
for Education

From: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
Sent: 11 August 2020 17:52  
To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>; Cath Jadhav <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
Subject: RE: Ofqual's technical report

Hi [REDACTED]

Attached is the contents page of the technical report. If you could flag which sections you're most interested in initially we can send stuff as and when it is ready. I think sections 2, 5 and 8 are probably in a format that we can share shortly if helpful?

Thanks.

From: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>  
Sent: 11 August 2020 18:30  
To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Cath Jadhav <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
Cc: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>  
Subject: RE: Ofqual's technical report

Hi [REDACTED]

Many thanks – happy to have 2,5,8 when they are ready but we are most immediately interested in 9 and 10.

Best wishes

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/educationgovuk](https://www.facebook.com/educationgovuk)



Department  
for Education

From: ■ [@education.gov.uk](mailto:■@education.gov.uk)

Sent: 11 August 2020 18:30

To: ■ [@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:■@ofqual.gov.uk); Cath Jadhav ■ [@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:■@ofqual.gov.uk)

Cc: ■ [@education.gov.uk](mailto:■@education.gov.uk); ■ [@education.gov.uk](mailto:■@education.gov.uk)

Subject: RE: Ofqual's technical report

Hi ■

Many thanks – happy to have 2,5,8 when they are ready but we are most immediately interested in 9 and 10.

Best wishes

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Department  
for Education

**From:** █  
**Sent:** 11 August 2020 19:41  
**To:** █@education.gov.uk>; Cath Jadhav █@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>  
**Cc:** █@education.gov.uk>; █@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Ofqual's technical report

█

Attached are sections 2, 4, 5 and 8 of the technical report (usual pw). Please note these are still drafts and need checking/proof-reading/annex checking etc. We're still working on the others, including 9 and 10.

Thanks

█

■  
**From:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 11 August 2020 21:53

**To:** Kate Keating [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>

**Subject:** FW: EMBARGOED: A-level students can use grades in mock exams to progress to degree courses

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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*Read our media blog [here](#).*



**From:** Mediapoint <mediapoint@pa.media>

**Sent:** 11 August 2020 21:14

**To:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

**Subject:** EMBARGOED: A-level students can use grades in mock exams to progress to degree courses

EDUCATION Exams

# A-level students can use grades in mock exams to progress to degree courses

21:13 - 11 Aug 2020

This story is embargoed until 22:30 - 11 Aug 2020

GCSE and A-level students will be able to use grades in mock exams to progress to university and college courses and employment, the Education Secretary is set to announce.

Results in mock tests – which were held before schools were forced to close amid the Covid-19 crisis – will carry the same weight as the calculated results to be awarded this month, the Government will say.

The move comes after unions called on the UK Government to follow Scotland's lead in scrapping moderated grades after the downgrading of more than 124,000 results was reversed.

In a U-turn announced on Tuesday, Scotland's Education Secretary John Swinney revealed that downgraded results would revert to the grades estimated by pupils' teachers.

It comes after this year's summer exams were cancelled amid Covid-19. Teachers were told to submit the grades they thought each student would have received if they had sat the papers.

Exam boards have moderated these grades to ensure this year's results – for students in England, Northern Ireland and Wales – are not significantly higher than previous years.

But now Education Secretary Gavin Williamson is due to tell students awaiting their A-level results this week that they can keep their grades in mock exams if they are higher than the calculated grade.

Students will still be able to sit exams in the autumn if they are unhappy with the grades they secured in mock exams, or if they are dissatisfied with results awarded by exam boards on Thursday.

All three grades will hold the same value with universities, colleges and employers, the Department for Education (DfE) is expected to say.

Mr Williamson is also due to announce an additional £30 million in funding to help schools and colleges carry out the autumn exam series for students wishing to sit GCSE and A-level exams.

But the appeals process – where individual students in England are dependent on schools and colleges to appeal against results on their behalf – is expected to remain the same.

Mr Williamson said: “Every young person waiting for their results wants to know they have been treated fairly.

“By ensuring students have the safety net of their mock results, as well as the chance of sitting autumn exams, we are creating a triple lock process to ensure they can have the confidence to take the next step forward in work or education.”

Evidence will need to be presented to satisfy the exam board that the mock exam was genuine.

The announcement comes as Labour warned that Boris Johnson risked “robbing a generation of young people of their future” unless unfairness in the exams system was addressed.

Concerns were raised by Labour that A-level and GCSE results could be downgraded for thousands of pupils in England because of the replacement grading system introduced.

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer said: “The SNP have been forced into a humiliating U-turn after a shambolic few days.

“With 24 hours before results are released, I would urge the Prime Minister to change course, or he risks robbing a generation of their future.”

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**From:** PS, Sec-OF-STATE <Sec-OF-STATE.PS@education.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 12 August 2020 18:00

**To:** Roger Taylor <roger.taylor@ofqual.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Cc:** PS, Advisers <Advisers.PS@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Letter from the Secretary of State to Ofqual Chair

Dear Roger,

Many thanks for your, and your teams, time and efforts over the last few days and weeks.

Please find attached a letter from the Secretary of State.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

***ATTACHMENT FOR EMAIL DATED 12 August  
2020, 18:00 IS BELOW:***



**Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP**  
Secretary of State

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Roger Taylor  
Chair, Ofqual  
Earlsdon Park  
53-55 Butts Road  
Coventry  
CV1 3BH

12<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Thank you for such a constructive conversation today regarding A-Level and GCSE grades. I deeply appreciate the work Ofqual has done over recent months to develop and implement a robust grading system and I know that we are both fully committed to preserving the system of calculated grades which, in the absence of exams, is the fairest method of recognising students' capability and performance.

Even the best system is not perfect, however, and it is important that we ensure the grades awarded are fair for all pupils. I welcome the appeal system announced by Ofqual last week that addressed some of these concerns, but also believe we must go further, where students have clearly demonstrated their capabilities.

It is for this reason that I set out my intention to announce that, where a student has achieved a higher grade in a valid mock, they can ask that that be considered as part of an appeal. I appreciate that in a normal year this is not something we would wish to do, but this year it is necessary and I deeply appreciate your commitment that, should I ask Ofqual to do this, you will do all that you can to deliver it. My officials stand ready to work with Ofqual, where necessary, to ensure an appropriate process can be put in place that is fair, robust and provides the necessary guidance as to how a valid mock should be defined.

Thank you again for all of your support.

I can't say how much we appreciate all of your help.

**Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP**  
Secretary of State for Education

**From:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 12 August 2020 21:25  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; Kate Keating  
[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Publish SES data (or not)

Hi Jacquie

As always, things are moving quickly! We've been explicitly asked by several journalists this evening if we're publishing and we've confirmed that we will. The problem with removing the reference to Scotland is that we're only publishing it because SQA did. We don't believe it's a particularly meaningful analysis but we've been repeatedly asked for it since last week. I've copied Kate in but imagine she would say that there is now considerable reputational risk if we do not publish, and the reference to Scotland is necessary for context.

Cath

**From:** Kate Keating  
**Sent:** 12 August 2020 21:29  
**To:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED]@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; SPATCHER, Jacquie  
[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Publish SES data (or not)

That's right.

I have confirmed that, similarly to SQA, we will publish final calculated grades and centre assessments grades by SES group.

**From:** Cath Jadhav  
**Sent:** 09 August 2020 12:10  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Julie Swan [REDACTED]@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; Michelle Meadows [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Data on CAGs v final grades by socio-economic group

Hi Jacquie

We've not finished looking at the GCSE data yet (given the later results day, we've only just got the final data for GCSE) but we should have it before we make a final call on A level. Not exactly sure of its ETA but I'll check and get back to you.

Cath

**From:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 09 August 2020 11:45  
**To:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Julie Swan [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; Michelle Meadows [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Data on CAGs v final grades by socio-economic group

Hi Cath – we've been having a bit of a debate at this end about the question of whether it's best for you to publish your data on the extent of "downgrading" by socio-economic groups, given the focus on this in Scotland. The emerging consensus is that it's probably better to get it out there, given that the headline numbers you gave us on our call on Friday were reassuring – though spads want to discuss with the SoS before making a final call on that. A question that's come up though is whether the GCSE data is looking reassuring as well as the A level data – because clearly if you publish the A level data you'll have to publish the GCSE data too. I can't remember whether you said on Friday that you'd run both or just the A level data – are you able to offer any reassurance or failing that, is it possible to run the GCSE data quickly?

I think spads will want to talk to the SoS tomorrow so it would be great to have a response today if possible. And whilst I'm here, I should apologise also for not having got across to you the "headline questions" we spoke about on

Friday. Yesterday was eaten up with other urgent work, but I'll get something to you today.

Many thanks

Jacquie

**From:** Cath Jadhav  
**Sent:** 10 August 2020 13:44  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Kate Keating [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; Michelle Meadows [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; Julie Swan [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Centres with all A\*/A CAGs

We should be able to get it to you by 2.30

I assume you want to know how many and what sort of centre they are?

Cath

**From:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 10 August 2020 13:36  
**To:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Kate Keating [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; Michelle Meadows [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>; Julie Swan [REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Centres with all A\*/A CAGs

Thanks Cath. Spads have just run asking for an ETA – can you let me know please?

Sorry...

Jacquie

**From:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 10 August 2020 13:05  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** Kate Keating [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Michelle Meadows [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Julie Swan [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Centres with all A\*/A CAGs

We're doing it now and I've moved it up the priority list!

Sent from my iPhone

On 10 Aug 2020, at 13:01, SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)> wrote:

Hi Cath – No 10 now asking for this too, and I understand spads have been on to Sally direct...

Jacquie

**From:** SPATCHER, Jacquie  
**Sent:** 10 August 2020 11:01  
**To:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** Kate Keating [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Michelle Meadows [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Julie Swan [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: Centres with all A\*/A CAGs

Hi Cath – sorry to add to your burdens but I'm being chased on this. I understand a figure of 3 centres has been suggested by the media to our press office (not sure if that's all A\*s or all A\*s and As). Spads v keen to know whether that's right and if not what the real figure is, so that we're not on the back foot. They are also v keen to know if possible which the centres are – not because (I am assured) they will put the names out there but because the media might have them.

Jacquie

**From:** Cath Jadhav [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 07 August 2020 12:43  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** Kate Keating [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Michelle Meadows [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>; Julie Swan [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ofqual.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Centres with all A\*/A CAGs

Hi Jacquie

I did think that after this morning but I've not had a chance yet to ask anyone to look, We'll take a look at the numbers and then have a think about what we could say.

Cath

Sent from my iPhone

On 7 Aug 2020, at 12:23, SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@education.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk)> wrote:

Hi Cath – spads have asked whether you could let us know how many (not which) centres submitted CAGs at all A\*-A. I assume that's a knowable thing – is it something you could let us have quickly or would it take longer to do? I imagine they're thinking of using this in media briefings to reinforce the importance of standardisation so it would be good to know also whether you'd be comfortable with that (hence copying Kate). If not precise numbers, perhaps you'd be comfortable a vaguer formulation like "a handful of" or "dozens of" – in any case, I think I need to give spads a sense of scale.

Thanks

Jacquie

**From:** Cath Jadhav  
**Sent:** 10 August 2020 16:46  
**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Equalities and SES

Jacquie

CAG adjustment by SES below, for A level C and above and GCSE 4 and above.  
The NA at the bottom of each table is where we can't match, so please ignore.

The pattern across GCSE and A level is very similar.

(Scotland version at the bottom)

Hope that makes sense – sending quickly while on a call with JCQ...

C.

A level (Grade C and above)

	2018	2019	2020 CAG	2020	Diff (CAG-final)
LoSES	74.03	72.64	85.02	74.60	-10.42
MiSES	77.96	77.21	87.69	78.20	-9.49
HiSES	81.12	80.29	89.30	80.96	-8.34
NASES	79.29	78.76	87.95	79.43	

GCSE (Grade 4 and above)

	2018	2019	2020 CAG	2020	Diff (CAG-final)
LoSES	60.37	60.68	70.70	61.82	-8.88
MiSES	70.44	70.45	78.89	71.21	-7.68
HiSES	80.10	80.20	86.60	80.41	-6.19
NASES	88.12	87.70	91.30	86.44	

Table A13 – Proportion of grades A–C at Higher by characteristic.

Characteristic	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 Estimates	2020 R
<b>Sex</b>						
Female	79.7%	79.6%	79.5%	76.8%	90.5%	
Male	74.3%	73.9%	73.5%	72.2%	86.7%	
<b>Age</b>						
15 to 18	77.6%	77.3%	77.2%	75.0%	88.9%	
Below 15	100.0%	96.1%	88.6%	93.3%	100.0%	
Over 18	65.1%	69.0%	65.2%	63.5%	83.9%	
<b>SIMD<sup>4</sup></b>						
0-20% (Most Deprived)	68.6%	68.2%	68.2%	65.3%	85.1%	
20-40%	72.7%	71.9%	71.3%	68.3%	86.3%	
40-60%	75.8%	75.0%	74.7%	73.4%	88.2%	
60-80%	79.1%	78.8%	78.9%	76.9%	89.6%	
80-100% (Least Deprived)	83.2%	83.9%	83.5%	81.7%	91.5%	

**From:** Cath Jadhav

**Sent:** 10 August 2020 19:31

**To:** SPATCHER, Jacquie [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

**Subject:** FW: surprising CAGs

Jacquie

Re my earlier email, these are the examples that Sally was referring to in the conversation with no. 10 on Friday. We will take a look to see how many centres look

similar but there is other, more urgent analysis that the team need to complete first. IN the meantime, maybe these examples are sufficient?

Cath

**One private college's A level Science CAGs**

Biology	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Historical	19.12	48.53	69.12	85.29	95.59	97.06
CAGs	35.30	100.00				

Chemistry	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Historical	34.15	50.00	67.07	84.15	91.46	96.34
CAGs	75.61	97.56	100.00			

Physics	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Historical	22.58	51.61	64.51	80.64	93.54	96.77
CAGs	43.33	100.00				

**Another private college's CAGs**

Further Maths	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Historical	31.58	47.37	73.68	78.95	94.74	94.74
CAGs	78.57	100.00				

**From:** Kate Keating

**Sent:** 12 August 2020 14:51

**To:** [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Off sen - our briefing to Sally



- Arrangements in place mean they can move on to university, college, training or employment as planned, with grades based on their teachers' judgements - moderated to make sure the same standard is applied students, whichever school, college or part of the country students' come from
- Vast majority of the grades awarded will be within one grade of the centre assessment grades submitted by teachers
- Every grade is based on teachers' judgements – either wholly or in combination with the statistics. For example, where adjustments are needed, students will be moved up or down according to teachers' views as to which students were closest to the grade boundary
- Adjustments are essential to create a level playing field for students at different schools and colleges, but will only be made where the evidence can support them
- We understand why the government has wanted to provide some additional assurance for students, by confirming that evidence from valid mock exams can be considered as part of an appeal. We are working urgently to operationalise this as fairly as possible and to determine the standards of evidence that will be needed for an appeal. We will provide more detail early next week.

*If asked about the centre which put in all A\*s: the vast majority of teachers have acted in the spirit of the arrangements this summer to submit an accurate estimate. A rare few have put forward implausibly high grades, including the example you give of a centre [don't identify] which for 2 subjects submitted all A\*s/As (despite previously having a normal grade distribution). While this has been exceptional, it shows how important moderation is – otherwise those students would have an advantage over their peers*

#### **Opportunity to appeal where something has gone wrong**

- Schools/colleges can appeal if they believe something has gone wrong in processing their results – if it made an error when submitting its information; or the exam board made a mistake when assigning a grade
- Can appeal if they can evidence grades are lower than expected because previous cohorts are not sufficiently representative of this year's students eg if a single-sex school has changed to co-educational or because of a major event, like a fire, in this or previous years
- This could include where the grades of unusually high or low ability students have been affected by the model because they fall outside the pattern of results in that centre in recent years
- We are working urgently to operationalise the gov't's announcement to allow valid mock exam evidence to be considered as part of an appeal, and the standards of evidence that will be needed for an appeal. We will provide more detail early next week.

[more on 'mock appeal's below]

If asked about the [redacted] case: won't comment on individual students, but the appeal arrangements allow for a situation where a centre believes the grades of one or more students has been affected by the model

#### **Universities and colleges will be flexible**

- Universities and colleges understand and will be flexible in the circumstances of this year
  - commitments to fair admissions practices (UUK)
  - contextual offers (Oxford Univ, amongst others)
  - extending period to hold places while appeals are completed

## **Further Q&A**

### **Are results still being issued tomorrow?**

Yes, students will receive their A level results tomorrow as planned

### **Do you think the ‘mock appeals’ will be possible?**

We understand why government has wanted to provide this additional assurance for students and we’re working at pace to operationalise this as fairly as possible and to determine the standards of evidence that will be needed for an appeal. We will provide more detail early next week.

### **How is a mock defined?**

We are working quickly to establish clear rules for what could be allowable as reliable evidence to support an appeal for a grade change on this basis. We provide more detail as soon as possible

### **Will you be releasing formal guidance?**

We recognise the need for students, schools and colleges to have clarity on what the process would be and the avenues for appeal. Further information will be published as early as possible **next week**. In the meantime, after results are issued tomorrow, schools or colleges which believe there has been an error or that the moderation process has not produced a reliable result can appeal using the existing appeals process.

### **Were you consulted on this change of direction from the government?**

As you would expect, discussions are happening at pace, everyone is focused on doing everything possible to support students in this of all years, while delivering fair, reliable results they can carry with them for the rest of their lives. Yes, we knew the SoS wanted to make an announcement – and now we’re working urgently to operationalise this as fairly as possible

### **What about instances where there are no mock exams? Some schools and colleges don’t do them/or not appropriate in some subjects?**

We are aware that not all schools and colleges will have mock exams to draw on. This is something we are considering alongside other factors. Our priority, as has been throughout, is ensuring this year’s arrangements are fairest possible for students.

### **Why can’t students just have mock grade?**

We are concerned that giving students grades based on their mock exam results could be unfair if further checks are not put in place. As many have explained today, the approach taken towards mock assessments varies considerably between schools and colleges and many students told us that they had concerns about grades based on their mocks. But in light of the SoS’s announcement we are looking at how to operationalise this as fairly as possible, so that a school or college could use evidence from a valid mock exam as part of its appeal. Exam boards, working with Ofqual, will determine what is a valid mock exam, with criteria we will publish as soon as possible.

### **Why can’t students just have their CAGs?**

We understand there is heightened interest in whether the approach now announced in Scotland will apply in England. We are concerned that giving students their centre assessment grades is unfair. Because the circumstances meant there was no opportunity to develop a common approach to grading, different schools and colleges will have used

different criteria, drawn from different evidence and applied different standards to come to their judgements. Therefore moderation we have put in place in England is essential to create a level playing for students – in this year, and every year.

**Will you apologise to students?**

I am very sorry that the circumstances this year meant students couldn't take their exams, and for the stress and anxiety they must be feeling. But we have done everything possible to come up with the fairest way of giving them grades so that they can move on and not be held back further because of COVID-19

The final published document for – attachment 1 – *Executive Summary (Awarding GCSE, AS & A levels in summer 2020: interim report)*  
- can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-gcse-as-a-levels-in-summer-2020-interim-report>

**From:** Kate Keating

**Sent:** 12 August 2020 23:32

**To:** SPATCHER, Jacque [REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@education.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Off sen - Ofqual outputs tmrw

All,

PI see attached 'guide to results' and exec summary of the technical report, being issued under embargo early tmrw. Can only take absolute showstopper comments, by 5am (sorry)

PI cc Cath and [REDACTED] who will pick up any urgent stuff in the morning, I'll be driving to Cov (lucky me 😊)

G'night, Kate

**Kate Keating**  
**Director of Communications, Ofqual**

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
• **Until further notice, do not send any correspondence to the Ofqual Earlsdon Park office, which is closed due to the current COVID-19 situation.**  
Earlsdon Park, 53-55 Butts Road, Coventry, CV1 3BH

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***ATTACHMENTS FOR EMAIL DATED 12 August 2020, 23:32 IS BELOW:***

**ATTACHMENT 1: The final published document can be found here:**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/909035/6656-2 - Executive\\_summary.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/909035/6656-2 - Executive_summary.pdf)

## Executive summary

### Awarding GCSE, AS, A level, advanced extension awards and extended project qualifications in summer 2020: interim report

The 2020 exam series has been exceptional. Early in 2020, when coronavirus (COVID-19) was first reported, we modified our normal contingency planning with exam boards to include widespread staff absences and/or large numbers of students being unable to take one or more of their exams due to illness or self-isolation.

On 18 March 2020, the Secretary of State announced<sup>1</sup> that the summer 2020 exam series would be cancelled in order to help fight the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and that students due to sit the exams would be awarded a grade based on an assessment of the grade they would have been most likely to achieve had exams gone ahead. On 23 March, in a written statement to Parliament,<sup>2</sup> the Secretary of State explained the government's intention that results would be issued to this year's cohort based on a range of evidence and data, including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment. This would be achieved by exam boards producing calculated grades ensuring the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students do not face a systemic

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disadvantage as a consequence of circumstances this year.

Since then, we have been working with exam boards to enable the award of grades for GCSE, AS, A level, Extended Project Qualification and Advanced Extension Award this summer, so that students can move on to sixth form, college, higher education, training, apprenticeships or employment.

Our aim in this work was to use an approach that was, as far as possible, fair to students who had been unable to sit their exams this summer. That approach should also ensure that the results issued had a similar value to grades issued in any other year, so that those using them to select students (sixth forms, universities, employers, etc.) could have confidence that their worth was in line with previous years. A critical factor in achieving that was maintaining overall national standards relative to previous years.

We considered many different options, but it was apparent that the best judges of the relative ability of students in a school or college were the teachers who had been

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<sup>1</sup> [Schools, colleges and early years settings to close.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Impact of Covid-19 on Summer Exams: Written statement - HLWS170](#)

preparing these students for their exams, tracking their progress relative to target grades, and, in the case of A level students applying to higher education, providing estimated grades.

We therefore asked teachers to provide, for each student for each subject they were entered for, a centre assessment grade (CAG) which represented the grade that student would have been most likely to achieve if teaching and learning had continued and students had taken their exams as planned.

We also asked teachers to provide a rank order of students for each grade for each subject. There were several reasons for this. First, we know from research evidence that people are better at making relative judgements than absolute judgements and that teachers' judgements tend to be more accurate when they are ranking students rather than estimating their future attainment. The research literature suggests that, in estimating the grades students are likely to achieve, teachers tend to be optimistic (although not in all cases). That is not surprising, teachers want to do the best for their students, and the analysis we carried out immediately after CAGs were submitted bears this out.

Exam boards adapted their IT portals to enable schools and colleges to submit over 5 million CAGs and rank order positions in early June 2020. This was achieved despite teachers often working remotely with limited access to school premises, and with exam board technical teams also working remotely.

Our initial analysis of the CAGs showed that they were, in general, optimistic (although not always) and the combined effect would be likely to lead to overall national results that were implausibly high. If we had awarded grades based on CAGs we would have seen overall results increase by far more than we have ever seen in a single year. At A level<sup>3</sup>, we would have seen the percentage of A\* grades go up by 6 percentage points from 7.7% of grades in 2019 to 13.9% of grades this year, and the percentage of grades that were B and above increase by over 13 percentage points from 51.1% in 2019 to 65% this year.

This optimism was not surprising. It is what is suggested in the research literature and data published every year by UCAS – schools and colleges tend to be optimistic when estimating the grades that students are likely to achieve. Our interviews with teachers, after CAGs had been submitted, confirmed this trend. Almost all the teachers we interviewed told us that they had generally predicted how the students would perform on a 'good day'. Although they knew that every year some students

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<sup>3</sup> Note that [2019 figures are for England only as reported by JCQ](#).

underperform or have a bad day, this was not the basis of their judgements. This might be as expected, but the cumulative effect of this optimism, if reflected in the final results, would have undermined confidence in those results.

Standardisation was not solely implemented to ensure that grades were not, overall, excessively high this year. The key purpose was to ensure fairness to students within the 2020 cohort. Without standardisation there was the potential for students to be unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged, depending on the school or college they attended and the approach they took. A key motivation for the design of the approach to standardisation that we took was to remove this potential inequality and, as far as possible, ensure that a grade represents the same standard, irrespective of the school or college they attended.

Given the circumstances this summer, we had no opportunity to put in place a system of national standardisation, to guide teachers in making their judgements consistently across the country. It was, though, essential that we put in place a mechanism to standardise those judgements being made in many thousands of different schools and colleges, in the interests of fairness to students. It was likely that different schools and colleges would take different approaches to generating CAGs and rank orders and that was likely to generate different levels of optimism in different centres (or perhaps in different subjects). That is what we saw.

It was important, then, to have a system to standardise teachers' judgements across schools and colleges, and that all exam boards took the same approach. A parallel can be drawn here with moderation of teachers' marking of coursework (non-exam assessment) in a normal year. Even when exam boards provide marking criteria, training materials and events to guide teachers in their marking, exam boards moderate the marking to ensure a common standard is applied, in the interests of fairness to students overall.

The rank order data allowed us to make fine-grained adjustments which is fairest for students. For example, with this information we could prioritise students for an upwards or downwards adjustment where necessary. Without the facility to perform this fine-grained adjustment it may have been necessary to adjust larger groups of students leading to an over or under adjustment.

In April and May we worked with technical experts across the sector to test a range of different statistical standardisation models using data from previous years. In selecting the final model, we chose the one that most accurately predicted students' grades in a way that did not systematically affect groups of students with particular protected characteristics. We also considered operational issues – how easy it was to implement the approaches consistently across all four exam boards – and

transparency – how easy it was to explain to schools and colleges how the model worked.

Our preferred model – known as the Direct Centre Performance model (DCP) – works by predicting the distribution of grades for each individual school or college. That prediction is based on the historical performance of the school or college in that subject taking into account any changes in the prior attainment of candidates entering this year compared to previous years. This was fine-tuned to take account of known issues such as centres with small cohorts of students, small-entry subjects, and tiered subjects. Decisions were also made on the number of years of historical data included in the model. The details of these decisions are set out in this report and are formalised in the regulations<sup>4</sup> we put in place for summer 2020.

Where schools and colleges had a relatively small cohort for a subject – fewer than 15 students when looking across the current entry and the historical data – the standardisation model put more weight on the CAGs. Since small teaching groups are more common for AS and A level than for GCSE, and given that the CAGs tended to be optimistic, it means that the outcomes in some AS and A level subjects are much higher this year. However, there is no statistical model that can reliably predict grades for particularly small groups of students. We have therefore used the most reliable evidence available, which is the CAGs.

Overall, A level results in England have increased by 2.4% at grade A and above compared to 2019. This is a larger change than observed in a typical year (for example, there was a 1% decrease in outcomes between 2018 and 2019).

Across all subjects and all centres, 96.4% of final calculated grades are the same as, or within one grade of the CAG submitted. A small percentage were adjusted by 2 grades or more, in some cases because it appeared that the centre's CAGs were

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very much higher than the historical results in the centre.

In any year, there is measurement uncertainty in the assessment process. This may be due to exam questions being asked that match well with one student's strengths but are poorly matched with the strengths of another student with the same overall level of ability. This year, there is also uncertainty in the results and the challenge is heightened by the absence of any formal assessment information on which to assess students. Based on the testing of the approaches applied this summer using results data from 2019, 51 of the 55 A levels tested had accurate predictions for more than 90% of students within plus or minus one grade<sup>5</sup>. This figure was lower for

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<sup>4</sup> [Requirements for the calculation of results in summer 2020](#)

<sup>5</sup> These A level figures are calculated once entries from schools and colleges with fewer than 10 entries in the subject have been removed

GCSE (12 out of 22 subjects) which was likely due to a combination of the grade scaling being longer for GCSE compared to A level and some limitations of the testing. GCSE English language, English literature and mathematics all had above 99% of students receiving results accurate within plus or minus one grade. Overall, the levels of predictive accuracy are broadly comparable to measures of marking consistency across an equivalent range of subjects.

To understand the impact of potential advantage or disadvantage across different demographic and socio-economic groups we have also performed an equalities analysis of calculated grades. The analyses show no evidence that this year's process of awarding grades has introduced bias.

This interim report provides a description of the process for all qualifications and presents analyses of CAGs and calculated grades for AS and A level. Analysis of GCSE CAGs and calculated grades will be published on GCSE results day. A final report will be published later in the year when we have completed our evaluation of this summer's results.

Throughout the development and testing of the model, and in its implementation, we have taken all possible steps to ensure the process is as fair as it can be and, where possible, have taken design decisions in the students' favour. For example, we have used calculations that assume that all students would have attended for all of their assessments this summer. In reality this would not have happened.

We know that, just as in any year, some students will be disappointed with their results. Some students may think that, had they taken their exams, they would have achieved higher grades. We will never know. But for those students who do wish to

improve their grades, there will be an autumn exam series.

Where possible, we have urged sixth forms, colleges and universities to be flexible in their selection this year. Overall, the results delivered this year will have met the aim of enabling large numbers of students to move on to the next stages of their lives.

**ATTACHMENT 2: The final published document can be found here:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/guide-to-as-and-a-level-results-for-england-2020>

## Key points

1. In the context of exams this summer being cancelled, we had 2 broad aims – to make sure as many students as possible could get grades so they could move on to the next stage of their lives, and to do that in as fair a way as possible.
2. Overall A level results in England are higher at grade A and above compared to 2019 (27.6% in 2020 compared with 25.2% in 2019). This reflects the approach to awarding grades this summer and the decisions that, where possible, have been taken in students' favour, as part of the standardisation process.
3. The majority of grades awarded to students are the same or within one grade of the centre assessment grades (CAGs) – 96.4% at A level and 91.5% at AS.

4. Students who are not happy with their calculated grade can ask their school or college about the appeals system or they can choose to sit an exam in the Autumn.
5. Entries for reformed AS qualifications in England have dropped by over 26% compared to last summer. This makes it much more difficult to interpret any changes in year-on-year results.

Today (13 August 2020) we are publishing:

- a summary of this year's results (below)
- a technical report that includes further details of the standardisation model
- an infographic about this year's A level results
- interactive analytics of A level outcomes in England and an interactive map of England showing A level results in different subjects by grade and county
- our requirements for the calculation of results in summer 2020 (republished including the detailed model specification)
- our letter to university admissions officers
- an analysis of grades awarded for Level 3 and 4 vocational and technical qualifications

You may also find it useful to read about [how we regulate GCSEs, AS and A levels in England](#).

## Summer 2020 arrangements

Following the closure of schools and colleges to most students in March, and the cancellation of summer exams, we have worked with others from across the sector to develop the fairest possible approach to awarding grades in GCSE, AS and A levels, in the absence of any exams. This is to allow as many students as possible to move on to the next stages of their lives, without being further disrupted by coronavirus (COVID-19). We have [consulted widely with students, parents/carers, equalities groups, teacher associations and exam boards on our proposals and there was broad support for the approach we set out in April](#).

We asked schools and colleges to submit centre assessment grades (CAGs) – the grade the student would have been most likely to

achieve if they had sat their exams – and a rank order for each subject. There was no opportunity to develop a common approach to grading across the many thousands of schools and colleges. Therefore we developed a statistical standardisation process so that there was a level playing field for students, regardless of their school or college.

In general, the CAGs submitted were optimistic. This is understandable and in line with the evidence from previous research. Our recent interviews with teachers who've been through the process this summer confirms that – they told us that they tended to think about how each student would perform on a good day, while knowing that every year some students have bad days. This was particularly the case for borderline students.

The combined effect of this optimism, if CAGs had been accepted, would have been an unprecedented increase in overall outcomes. For example, at A level, the CAGs at grade A (and above) were 12.5% higher than outcomes in 2019. This would far exceed any overall variation seen in a typical year and would undermine the credibility of students' grades. Accepting CAGs would also mean that any leniency or severity in the CAGs submitted by individual schools and colleges would not be addressed. This would make it easier to get a grade at one school or college than another leaving unfairness between schools and colleges.

In developing the standardisation model, we consulted, and received broad support for a model that aimed to:

- provide students with the grades they would mostly have achieved if they had sat exams
- was common across exam boards and subjects for as many students as possible
- avoided any systematic advantage or disadvantage to particular student on the basis of particular protected characteristics or socioeconomic status
- was transparent
- was deliverable in a way that could be overseen by Ofqual

We have published details of the standardisation model in a technical report. In developing the model we have sought, where possible, to make decisions that work in students' favour when awarding grades

this summer. The technical report also provides information on the approach to awarding grades to centres with small cohorts, where it would not be defensible to rely on the statistical evidence.

As in other years, we have used statistical predictions at the cohort level to guide overall national outcomes. These predictions use the relationship between students' prior attainment and results in a reference year, and use this relationship to predict the expected outcomes in the current year. In the absence of any evidence of student performance this year, the predictions are key in ensuring that, as far as possible, overall standards are maintained, [as the Secretary of State requested](#) in his direction to Ofqual.

## **Equalities**

We have conducted equalities analyses to consider whether any demographic or socio-economic groups of students have been advantaged or disadvantaged by the process of awarding grades this summer. This has included a consideration of gender, ethnicity, free school meal eligibility (FSM), English as an additional language (EAL) students, socioeconomic status (SES) and special educational needs (SEN). We considered the extent to which the relationship between results and student background variables in 2018 and 2019 would be maintained in the 2020 outcomes.

The analyses conducted shows no evidence that this year's process of awarding grades has introduced any systemic bias. Changes in overall outcomes for students with different protected characteristics and from different socio-economic backgrounds are similar to changes seen between 2018 and 2019. The details of our analyses are included in our technical report.

## **Summer 2020 results**

Overall, A level results at grade A and above are higher than in 2019, by 2.4%. This is not surprising given the approach to awarding grades this summer. As in any year, there is variation in outcomes by subject. There is greater variation in some subjects than in a typical year given the approach to awarding grades, in particular the approach to awarding grades to centres with small cohorts. For every

school/college, we have used the most reliable available evidence and where the number of students is much smaller, the statistical model is less reliable. In those cases, we have therefore relied more on the CAGs. As a result, in subjects where there are more small cohorts (classes of 15 students or fewer), we have seen larger year-on-year changes.

Our analyses show that the majority of the grades awarded to students are the same or within one grade of the centre estimates – 96.4% at A level and 91.5% at AS – reflecting the care and professionalism with which schools and colleges have approached the task.

## Number of A level qualifications per student

JCQ published data presents the numbers of entries and certifications, rather than data at student level. This is because students typically take AS and A levels with more than one exam board. It is also worth noting that many students take AS or A levels alongside other qualifications, which we have not included in this analysis.

We have combined the exam board data to look at the average number of A levels per student for 18-year-olds in England entering at least one A level each year (students generally complete their A levels at age 18). This is shown in the table below. For A level, the average number has remained stable since 2016 and that continues this year.

### Average number of A level qualifications per student (18-year-olds in England)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
A level	2.68	2.67	2.68	2.66	2.67

We have also considered the number of A levels that each individual student was entered for. The table below shows the percentage of students that entered one A level, 2 A levels and so on. In recent years, there has been a trend towards a higher percentage of 18-year-old A level students taking 3 A levels.

## Percentage of students by the number of A levels taken per student (18-year-olds in England)

A levels	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1	12.1%	11.3%	10.5%	10.6%	10.5%
2	16.2%	16.8%	16.8%	17.0%	16.4%
3	63.6%	65.4%	66.9%	68.0%	68.7%
4	7.6%	6.2%	5.6%	4.3%	4.4%
5+	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%

## AS qualifications

The reformed AS qualifications in England are standalone qualifications that do not count towards an A level. Students therefore do not have to take the AS qualification if they intend to enter at A level.

Following reform, AS entries have declined, and this has continued this summer. Entries are down from just over 1.1 million in 2016 to 70,500 this year. This means that entries to some AS subjects are now relatively small. Where the cohorts are small and changing year on year, outcomes are likely to change, making any comparisons over time difficult.

Instead, we have analysed the number of 17-year-old students taking at least one AS qualification in 2020 compared to previous years. This is shown in the table below. The number of students taking at least one AS qualification has declined significantly since 2017, following a smaller decline between 2016 and 2017.

## Number of students taking at least one AS qualification (17-year-olds in England)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
AS	270,500	209,540	64,810	40,880	27,100

