

Communication to Parents and Students on Appeals

Who are JCQ? The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is a membership organisation comprising the eight largest providers of qualifications in the UK. JCQ member awarding organisations were instructed by Department of Education and regulators to establish requirements for awarding Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) this summer that schools were instructed to follow. Guidance from JCQ for parents and guardians can be found [here](#).

What is a Centre Policy? Every school was required by JCQ to complete a Centre Policy for determining teacher assessed grades (TAGs) in Summer 2021. Every school must have a Centre Policy that matches its own circumstances. Our policy can be found [here](#). This policy takes account of [JCQ Guidance on the determination of grades for A/AS Levels and GCSEs for summer 2021](#), which is referred to as the JCQ guidance throughout the policy.

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

No single assessment grade is a pupil's TAG – Subjects have followed the JCQ guidance and evidence has consisted of a 'broad range', covering all content completed. Teachers informed pupils of the range of evidence used to award the TAG grade in the final term. The JCQ guidance states: "More recent evidence is likely to be more representative of student performance, although there may be exceptions." This is why A-Level and GCSE students in all subjects completed Assessment Series Examinations, which followed a rigorous process of moderation and quality assurance.

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

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

If you wish to request data that contributed to a specific subject TAG grade, then the data that the subject has indicated makes up the TAG will be available upon request following the release of results.

On results day, or as soon as possible after students will be able to request this information.

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

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

There is also the option to resit GCSEs, A-levels and some AS levels in the autumn, which may be preferable to some students. The design, content and assessment of these papers will be the same as in a normal year.

3. What are the grounds for appeal?

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

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

4. What does 'unreasonable' mean?

'Unreasonable' is a technical term in this context and means that no educational professional acting reasonably could have selected the same evidence or come up with the same grade. This means that just because other forms of evidence may have been equally valid to use, the selection of evidence is not unreasonable. Because of the flexibility of the approach this year, every school and college will have used different forms of evidence. It also means that the independent reviewers will **not** remark or grade students' evidence. Instead, they will look to see whether any teacher acting reasonably could have arrived at the same grade.

5. What will be the outcome of an appeal?

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

6. What's a priority appeal?

Priority appeals will be handled more quickly than other appeals, where possible before UCAS's advisory deadline of 8 September.

Priority appeals are only open to **A-Level students starting university this autumn, who have missed out on the conditions of their firm or insurance offer.**

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

JCQ cannot offer priority appeals for GCSE students, unfortunately.

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

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

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

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

8. What should I do before appealing?

Students must read the JCQ Student and Parent guide before appealing, which will be available on the JCQ website by results days. Students and parents are also encouraged to read the 'Frequently Asked Questions' section found at the end of this letter. We may not be able to offer as much advice and guidance on the likely success of an appeal this summer as we would in normal years, as we have already moderated, and quality assured all the grades ourselves.

9. What are the two stages of an appeal?

All appeals, on any of the grounds above, must first go through a centre review. At this stage, we will check for any administrative errors, and check that our policies and procedures were followed correctly. Our policy has already been approved by the exam boards, so we are only ensuring that we followed this properly. The outcome of the centre review will be communicated to students when made. At the centre review stage, if we find that a grade should go up or down, we will ask the exam board to change it. They will then consider this request.

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

10. How do I make an appeal?

Once a student has looked over the evidence and believes an error has occurred (as set out in section 3), the student must fill in the first section of the JCQ appendix B form here and send it to results2021@jws.bham.sch.uk to begin the appeals process.

11. What are the deadlines for priority appeals?

For a reminder of what a priority appeal is, see section 6.

The suggested deadline for requesting a priority appeal is 16 August (students cannot appeal before results day on 10 August).

We will attempt to complete the centre review by 20 August*. If students wish to progress this to an awarding organisation appeal, they must send the completed form to the school by 23 August for priority appeals results2021@jws.bham.sch.uk

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

12. What are the deadlines for non-priority appeals?

Non-priority appeals are any A-Levels or vocational qualifications, where a firm or insurance university place is not pending, as well as any GCSE or BTEC qualification. The deadline for submitting a centre review is 3 September; and the deadline for submitting an awarding organisation appeal is 10 September.

Appeals received after these dates may still be considered.

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

We are forbidden from disclosing the Teacher Assessed Grades to any third party, including students and parents, until results days. Any teacher or member of staff who does this is committing exam malpractice. Although students may have been given marks or grades on single pieces of evidence, we cannot disclose the final submitted TAG.

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

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

Frequently Asked Questions

Please read the following information which will assist you in deciding whether you wish to appeal your child's TAG grade in a given subject based on your belief an error has occurred.

i. My son/daughter achieved a higher grade in their Assessment Series than was awarded in their TAG?

All subject teachers made holistic decisions on the grades determined for each student, taking into account all work completed during GCSE's & A-Level's. So, although more weighting was placed on Assessment Series results, performance in a vast array of work/assessments/coursework was considered. Teachers considered the quality of the work in relation to assessment materials used and published grade descriptors and grading exemplification material to help them reach a final grade.

Evidence can be selected from any point during the duration of the course of study. It is also important to note the Joint Qualification Council (JCQ) guidance states that the grading process 'should account for the context in which each student's evidence has been produced'. Therefore, teachers will consider the context of all assessments when determining the TAG.

Therefore, it is important to understand a higher grade in an Assessment Series than awarded in a TAG does not necessarily constitute an error.

The process used complied with the Centre Policy that was agreed by JCQ awarding organisations.

ii. How did the school ensure the TAGs submitted were valid?

Every school involved in the process has submitted a Centre Policy, outlining the process it will follow for the summer 2021 TAG, to examination boards. The policy is reviewed by the exam board to ensure it meets the required standard.

Staff have received training in all aspects of the grading process. This has included whole school training on specific aspects (including making objective judgments) and department level standardisation and moderation meetings.

The school has also conducted robust subject and centre level quality assurance processes to ensure the grades submitted are valid and reliable. Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP) also conducted external moderation across the partnership of schools. The school may also be subject to external quality assurance from exam boards. Ofqual are requiring all schools to submit sample evidence from selected subjects as part of their quality assurance processes to ensure standards are maintained.

iii. My son/daughter wasn't able to complete any work during Covid-19 Lockdown at home, has this affected their TAG grade?

Although strong teaching, learning and assessment carried on through periods of online learning, assessments were designed to include topics all pupils had access to. To ensure this was adhered to, subject specialists completed a 'Curriculum Coverage Document' that was included in our Centre Policy that was approved by the awarding organisations.

All children entitled to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments were identified in our Centre Policy and we endeavoured to ensure that these were met.

iv. My child was adversely affected by Covid-19, has this been taken into account

John Willmott School wrote to families, prior to the submission of TAGs, to ask if any student had been adversely affected by Covid-19 and where John Willmott School was informed this has been taken into account.

v. X School did different assessments, was it a fair playing field?

No two schools approached the TAG awarding in the same way. John Willmott School (as part of the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership) submitted a Centre Assessment Policy outlining our comprehensive strategy in awarding TAG grades that was approved by the awarding organisations. We had robust procedures in place to ensure fairness, including utilising external exam moderators, anonymous marking and internal moderation to ensure a fair system. All pupils were given a topic list of what was included on the Assessment Series examinations to aid and focus revision.

vi. How robust were the assessments used?

Exam board assessments were distributed by exam boards at the end of March. They were optional, but all GCSE and A-Level courses at John Willmott School used these resources to ensure a robust process. In all subjects, Assessment Series examinations used questions written by the relevant exam boards used at GCSE and A-Level.

vii. Can my child resit their assessments?

The Department for Education has indicated that there will be an Autumn Series of assessments to provide an opportunity for students to re-sit, where possible. At this stage we do not have any further details, but we will provide further communication as soon as we do.