



**Mr Jim Cunningham MP**  
**House of Commons**  
**London**  
**SW1A 0AA**

6 November 2018

Dear Mr Cunningham,

**Parliamentary Question 180097: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of requests for exam re-marking for (a) GCSE, (b) BTEC, and (c) A-Level exams by students at (i) community and academy comprehensive schools, (ii) community and academy grammar schools, and (iii) private schools in each of the last five years.**

The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP has asked Ofqual to respond to you directly regarding your recent parliamentary question. A copy of this response will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Ofqual is the independent regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. We regulate the awarding organisations that offer GCSEs, A levels and Applied General and Technical qualifications.<sup>1</sup>

We require each awarding organisation to ensure that its marking reflects the performance demonstrated by a learner and that its markers apply the mark scheme consistently. Under Ofqual's rules if an individual or school or college is concerned that there has been an error in the original marking, it can ask for that mark to be reviewed. For GCSEs, AS and A level qualifications, the four recognised awarding organisations (AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC) have published a common approach through their representative body, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). For Applied General and Technical qualifications the procedure for appeal will be published on the relevant awarding organisation website.

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<sup>1</sup> BTECs are a proprietary brand owned by the awarding organisation Pearson Education Ltd. BTECs are grouped under the category of Applied General and Technical Qualifications.

For GCSEs, AS and A levels, where a request for a review of marking or moderation has been submitted, we expect an awarding organisation to review the original marking to identify if a marking error has occurred. The review is not a remark of the original assessment. Where the awarding organisation identifies a marking error during a review of marking they are required to correct it. The correction may mean that marks can go up or down. We expect that a mark that reflects the reasonable exercise of academic judgement, in the context of the mark scheme, should not be changed. In July 2017, we published our research that looked at the distinction between marking errors and legitimate differences of opinion when conducting reviews of marking. The research is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/distinguishing-between-marking-errors-and-differences-of-opinion>.

Each December, we publish official statistics for GCSEs, AS and A levels that set out the proportion of grades that were changed following a review of marking or moderation. We publish this data for both examined and non-examined components of qualifications, and so the measure is for the qualifications as a whole, not just examinations. Our official statistics can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual/about/statistics>.

It should be noted that, before the 2016 summer exam series, we revised the rules for reviews of marking. As referenced earlier we did this to address our concern that previously, while reviewers corrected marking errors, they also sometimes changed marks where an error had not been made. This means that comparisons between the data before and after 2016 are difficult to make.

Data on reviews of marking and moderation for GCSEs, AS and A levels from summer 2018 will be published in December 2018.

We do not have similar data available for Applied General and Technical Qualifications. We are currently considering what data and measures we may be able to publish in relation to these.

#### Reporting of data by different centre type

In our response to your Parliamentary Question 171655, we set out the number of GCSEs and AS/A level grades that were challenged and changed for each of the last five years, except in 2013, as England only data prior to 2014 has not been published as official statistics. Official statistics are available prior to 2014 that report for England, Wales and Northern Ireland combined. I have updated my response to this question to

clarify this detail and here provide a copy of the letter. The updated response has also been laid in the Libraries of both Houses.

The official statistics for GCSEs, AS and A levels that set out the proportion of grades that were changed following a review of marking or moderation, are not broken down by centre type, including by community and academy comprehensive schools, community and academy grammar schools, and private schools. This is because we do not collect this information from the awarding organisations.

When schools or colleges submit information to their awarding organisation, they will classify their centre type according to the JCQ centre type codes. There has been some concern raised about the integrity of this data. JCQ is currently reviewing the centre type categories and looking to support centres when they decide the correct categorisation. We are working with JCQ on its arrangements to ensure information we may publish in the future include correct information on centre type.

I do hope this information is useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Collier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.

**Sally Collier**  
Chief Regulator