



Ms E Hardy MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

22 June 2020

Dear Ms Hardy,

**PQ 56139: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what processes his Department has put in place to determine the assessed grades at (a) GCSE and (b) A level of students who have registered at an exam centre but studied privately outside of a school or college.**

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.

On 3 April, we published our Guidance for GCSEs, AS and A level awarding: summer 2020.<sup>1</sup> This information is relevant to all students and exam centres in England using GCSE, AS and A levels, Extended Project Qualifications (EPQ) and Advanced Extension Awards (AEA) in maths regulated by Ofqual and offered by AQA, OCR, Pearson, WJEC Eduqas, ASDAN and City & Guilds.

As exams will not take place this summer, students' grades will instead be based on evidence of their likely performance in the exams had they gone ahead. Schools and colleges (centres) have now submitted to exam boards, for each student and for each subject for which they were entered, judgements on the grade the student would most likely have received had the exams taken place (a centre assessment grade), and the rank order of each student at each grade in each subject in that centre.

Where centres have accepted entries from private candidates, those students should have been included in the centre's submission to the exam board. However, a private candidate could only be included in this way where the Head of Centre was confident that they and their staff had seen

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2020>

sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement.

We have consulted<sup>2</sup> on the arrangements for private candidates, and received broad support for our proposal that exam boards should only be allowed to issue grades for private candidates for whom they had received from a Head of Centre a centre assessment grade and a rank order position. That is, that their grades should be awarded on the same basis as all other students. We have worked closely with exam boards to consider all possible alternatives for private candidates to give the opportunity for as many students as possible to get a grade this year, whilst maintaining the validity of the qualification for all students receiving grades in these exceptional circumstances. We have also carefully analysed the responses to our public consultation. Unfortunately, no workable alternative possibilities were identified, and therefore we decided that private candidates could receive grades only through centres, as outlined above.

On 30 April, exam boards published further guidance to support Heads of Centre making judgements about private candidates, and we published an update to our own information.<sup>3</sup>

The exam boards' guidance set out alternative sources of evidence a school or college might have considered where it did not have sufficient evidence about a student's attainment to submit a centre assessment grade and rank order information. The exam boards allowed for private candidates to transfer to another centre, ahead of the grading process this summer, where the centre where they had originally registered decided it could not submit a centre assessment grade. So that the grading process is fair, the guidance highlighted that the Head of Centre must have the same level of confidence in the grade and rank order position as for all other students.

Exam boards put arrangements in place to enable students to enter with an alternative centre where they had legitimate evidence of their achievement. We know that the exam boards took a flexible approach and continued to accept entries after the deadline, where a school or college was able to determine and submit a centre assessment grade for a private candidate.

Through the arrangements outlined above we know that many thousands of private candidates will receive calculated grades this summer. However, we recognise that it was not possible for all private candidates to receive a centre assessed grade in this way as some students had insufficient evidence of their work that could be considered by a centre. We appreciate that this will be very disappointing for those candidates. These candidates will have the opportunity to take their exams in the autumn or next summer.

We have recently consulted on arrangements for an additional exam series in the autumn, in accordance with government policy. These exams will be open to students who had entered to take exams this summer, including

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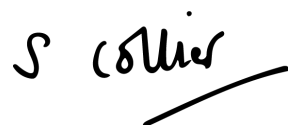
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/exceptional-arrangements-for-exam-grading-and-assessment-in-2020>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2020>

those who were unable to receive a calculated grade. The consultation is now closed, and we will publish the decisions from the consultation as soon as is reasonably possible.

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