



Mr W Wragg MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

23 July 2020

Dear Mr Wragg,

PQ72219: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will allow an appeals process which takes into account pupil-specific data for schools to challenge GCSE grades awarded during the covid-19 outbreak in 2020.

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](#). We set out that for every GCSE, AS and A level subject, exam boards required each school, college or other exam centre to submit for each student the following information:

- a centre assessment grade – a judgement about the grade a student was most likely to have achieved had they sat their exams; and
- the rank order of students within each grade.

We explained that exam boards would standardise the judgements across different centres, using a statistical methodology developed in conjunction with Ofqual.

We publicly consulted on aspects of our proposed arrangements for awarding GCSEs, AS and A level in summer 2020¹, including on appeals, and on 22 May we confirmed how GCSEs, AS and A levels would be awarded this summer.²

We are committed to making sure students are not disadvantaged by the cancellation of exams so they can progress to the next stage of their lives. The Secretary of State said in his direction to Ofqual that students should have access to a right of appeal if they believe the process was not followed correctly in their

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/exceptional-arrangements-for-exam-grading-and-assessment-in-2020>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2020>

case. Therefore, following our consultation on arrangements for awarding in summer 2020³ and in accordance with government policy, we have confirmed that a centre can appeal to an exam board on the grounds that:

- the exam board used the wrong data when calculating the grade of all, some or just one of a centre's students, including because the centre submitted the wrong data; and/or
- the calculated grades generated by the model were incorrectly allocated or communicated to all, some or just one of a centre's students.

In our recent consultation on the detail of the appeals arrangements to be in place this year, we gave examples of when a school or college might appeal because the exam boards used the wrong data. This includes where the centre has had a significant change its circumstances and it has evidence that can show how some or all of its historical data is unrepresentative of its likely performance this year. This might be, for example, because of a big shift in the demographic makeup of the cohort or a particularly significant event that affected a previous cohort. The centre might argue on appeal that a more limited range of historical data should be used. We will finalise our guidance on appeals shortly. Exam boards will also publish details of their appeal arrangements.

We have not allowed for an appeal to be brought on behalf of an individual student on the grounds that their grades should not be standardised or that the standardisation model should be varied for them. We believe this would be unfair. The statistical standardisation model is analogous to the setting of grade boundaries in normal years, against which no appeal is permitted.

There may be rare cases where a student considers centre assessment grades or rank order information was demonstrably affected by bias – this would need to be investigated. Evidence of bias could, regardless of any appeal facility, be raised by a student with their centre or with the exam board who would then investigate the matter as alleged malpractice.

Yours sincerely,



Sally Collier
Chief Regulator

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/exceptional-arrangements-for-exam-grading-and-assessment-in-2020>