

Summer Exams and Appeals FAQ

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

Grades this summer were based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). TAGs were submitted to the exam boards by us as a holistic assessment of students' performance in a subject, following a rigorous process of assessment, moderation and quality assurance. The full guidance document from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is available via this link <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/JCQ-Guidance-on-the-Determination-of-Grades-for-A-AS-Levels-and-GCSEs-Summer-2021.pdf> This is the document we, as all schools, followed to the letter in arriving at our TAGs.

These grades will then be approved by the relevant exam board, following external quality assurance checks they will carry out with us.

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

What do I do if my child or I'm not happy with their 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.

What are the grounds for appeal?

There are five main grounds for appeal, as dictated by the JCQ. They are:

- You think we have made an **administrative error**: an example of this would be putting the wrong grade into the exam 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 your child 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 your child was unreasonable.
- You think the **academic judgement on the grade your child was given was unreasonable**.

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 exam board 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.

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.

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 your son/daughter decided not to confirm a firm conditional offer and to go through clearing instead, JCQ cannot offer them 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.

What should we do if my child doesn't get into their first choice of university?

First, don't panic. Speak to Mr Hancock or a member of Leadership Group about your child's options. They may wish to go through clearing, or sit the autumn exams or summer exams next year to try to improve their grade.

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

What should we do before appealing?

Students must read the JCQ Student and Parent guide before appealing, a link to which is as follows: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JCQ-Guidance-for-Students-and-Parents-on-Summer-2021.pdf>

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.

What are the two stages of an appeal?

All appeals, on any of the grounds above, must first go through a **centre review**, which is carried out by us at school. 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 (exam board) appeal**. They must fill in the appeal form (see link 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.

How does my child make an appeal?

Following results days, students should fill in the first section (Stage One Centre Review) of the JCQ form [here](#) and send it to Mr Mason (mmason@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk).

What are the deadlines for priority appeals?

The suggested deadline for requesting a priority appeal (**for A level students starting university this autumn, who have missed out on the conditions of their firm or insurance offer**) is 16 August (students cannot appeal before results day on 10 August).

NB if your child studied an A level/BTEC at another centre as a guest student in the Sixth Form Partnership, they will need to contact the teacher **at that centre** and not Sir Graham Balfour school, if they wish to request an appeal.

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 Stage Two form [here](#) to us by 23 August for priority appeals.

*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.

What are the deadlines for non-priority appeals?

Non-priority appeals are any A levels, GCSEs or vocational qualifications, where a firm or insurance university place is not pending.

The deadline for submitting a centre review (Stage 1) is 3 September; and the deadline for submitting an awarding organisation (Stage 2) appeal is 10 September. Appeals received shortly after these dates may still be considered.

You know 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 by human beings, 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.