



28 June 2019

Dear

Setting and maintaining standards in GCSE, AS, A level and Project qualifications this summer

This letter is to notify you that we have published the Summer 2019 Data Exchange Procedures for GCE (AS/A level), GCSE and Project qualifications (the procedures) and accompanying templates on our website.

We have written to you separately already explaining our decision following the NRT for 2019. Annex A to the procedures confirms that decision. Please note that Annex A is currently embargoed and has been provided to you in confidence. The text of Annex A will not be published until 22 August. You must not disclose the contents of Annex A other than so far as is necessary for you to comply with our requirements.

This letter also sets out our expectations in relation to setting standards in GCSEs, AS, A level and Project qualifications in summer 2019. This approach has been agreed by the Ofqual Board, is set out in qualification-specific requirements, and is in line with our approach in recent years.

Our priority, as in recent years, is the fair awarding of qualifications so that the cohort in 2019 is not advantaged or disadvantaged. A key aspect of this is aligning grade standards between exam boards, so that it is no easier to achieve a particular grade with one board than with another.

Summer 2019 Data Exchange Procedures

The procedures are a Regulatory Document and set requirements in accordance with the GCSE, GCE and Project qualification level conditions. This means that exam boards must comply with the requirements set out in the procedures. The procedures have immediate effect.

It is important that grade standards across all exam boards are consistent. Reviewing awarding data in advance of results will provide us with some assurance that this has been achieved.

As in previous years, the information shared with the regulators and between exam boards is confidential and should only be used for the purpose of monitoring summer award outcomes.

The procedures follow consultation with all exam boards via the Standards and Technical Issues Group (STIG) meetings. We also discussed the procedures with you at the Maintenance of Standards meeting on the 12 June 2019 and allowed an opportunity for representations. No issues were raised in relation to the data exchange by exam boards at this meeting or subsequently by way of representations. We invited and received representations in relation to the NRT separately.

The following materials will be available next week from the secure collaborative portal:

- Summer 2019 Data Exchange Procedures
- Exam board specific reporting templates
- Details of our processes for reviewing outcome data, which has also been published on our website.

GCSEs graded 9 to 1

Where the new 9 to 1 GCSEs are awarded in the first and second year, the Ofqual Board agreed that awarding would be based primarily on statistical predictions, and that predictions would be used to ensure alignment as follows:

- between the new 4/3 boundary and the previous C/D boundary,
- between the new 7/6 boundary and the previous A/B boundary, and
- between the new 1/U boundary and the previous G/U boundary.

The Board agreed that other boundaries would be set arithmetically, with the exception of grade 9. In 2016, the Board confirmed that grade 9 would be set in the first year using the 'tailored approach' and thereafter using predictions to carry forward the standard set in the first year.

We have set out principles for awarding new GCSEs in appendix 3 of the data exchange procedures. Our expectation is that you will follow these principles when awarding new GCSEs in the first and second year this summer.

For qualifications being awarded in the third year, we have agreed that reporting tolerances will apply at grades 7 and 4. We have set out our expectations in relation to grade 9 in the data exchange procedures.

AS

The provisional entry data shows that AS entries have dropped again. As a result, predictions based on prior attainment may be less reliable, for two reasons. First, if the students this year are not representative of students in previous years in ways other than prior attainment, we might have less confidence in the predictions. Second, the increasingly lower overall volumes will likely mean that predictions for individual specifications will, in some cases, be based on relatively small numbers. Our view is that predictions provide exam boards with a common starting point, but, for the reasons

outlined above, examiner judgement will be an important source of evidence in maintaining standards in AS specifications given the ongoing changes in entry.

A levels

Where A levels are not changing, we expect that you will continue to maintain grade standards using predictions based on prior attainment at GCSE.

Where new A levels are awarded for the first and second time, the Ofqual Board agreed that awarding should be based primarily on statistical predictions derived from GCSE prior attainment.

We have set out principles for awarding new A levels in appendix 3 of the data exchange procedures. Our expectation is that you will follow these principles when awarding new A levels for the first and second time this summer.

For qualifications being awarded for the third time, we have agreed that reporting tolerances will apply at grade A. We have set out our expectations in relation to grade A* in the data exchange procedures.

Project qualifications

This year we will be monitoring the outcomes for the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). Our expectations in relation to the EPQ are set out in the data exchange procedures.

Summer 2019 awarding risks

As you are aware, under General Condition A6 you have a duty to take all reasonable steps to identify the risk of the occurrence of any incident which could have an Adverse Effect. Where such risks are identified, you are required to prevent or, where it cannot be prevented, to reduce the risk of that incident occurring and to prevent or mitigate any Adverse Effect that the incident could have. We expect that you will use your own risk assessment to identify areas of risk to awarding in summer 2019 and to notify us as appropriate.

I look forward to reviewing the outcomes with you at the Maintenance of Standards meetings on the 1st and 6th August. In the meantime, if you or your colleagues have any questions, please get in touch with me or Rachel Taylor.

Yours sincerely,



Cath Jadhav
Director of Standards and Comparability