



12 June 2020

## **Open letter to Heads of Centre**

Dear Head of Centre,

### **Awarding calculated grades: GCSEs, AS and A levels summer 2020**

I normally write to schools and colleges at this time of year, when we publish provisional entries data for GCSEs, AS and A levels. [This year's data](#) shows a small increase in GCSE entries (2%), with rises in combined science, maths and English language, reflecting an increase in the size of the cohort. A level entries have dropped slightly (by 2%), also reflecting changes in the cohort size.

While the context for awarding these qualifications this year is very different, the results will be as important as they always are for the thousands of students keenly waiting to move forward in their lives. In the unprecedented circumstances we face this summer, the approach we have set out is the fairest way of making sure students have their grades in time to progress to further study or employment.

We know that many students would prefer to have taken their exams, but that was just not possible in the current circumstances. Instead, everyone across the sector is working together so that students don't miss out because their exams have been cancelled. As the window closes for you to submit centre assessment grades and rank order information, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, teachers and exams officers for the role everyone has played in making these judgements objectively and fairly for all students and in submitting them to the exam boards on time.

We recognise that because of these unprecedented circumstances, your staff have not had national training to support them in making standardised judgements. To bring consistency to judgements, all grades will be

standardised by exam boards, using a process developed by Ofqual. It is highly likely that all centres will see some adjustment, in at least one subject, to their centre assessment grades. Such adjustments are in the interests of fairness to students because they will ensure, as far as possible, that individual centres have not been too severe or too generous in comparison with others.

We have [published a range of resources – including films and an infographic - to help you, and your students, parents and carers, understand the arrangements this summer.](#)

## **Results**

Students should be reassured that certificates will look the same as in any other year and they will be issued their results on the expected dates in August:

- AS and A Levels: Thursday 13 August
- GCSEs: Thursday 20 August

I know many schools and colleges are already making plans for issuing results, particularly if public health restrictions remain in place; and for any additional support which might be provided to help students in the circumstances of this summer. May I take this opportunity to remind you of the **JCQ's change of exam results embargo time – from 6.00am to 8.00am**. This will help students to have access to support when they receive their results and no GCSE, AS or A level results should be issued before this time.

## **Appeals**

As in any year, you will be supporting some students who are disappointed with their results. If you believe that something has gone wrong with a student's grades you will be able to put in an appeal to the exam board on their behalf. We expect that any mistakes will be quickly found and corrected. We are aware of concerns that students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with particular protected characteristics may be less inclined to question their results. To help you make sure your students, parents and carers know what options are available we, and the exam boards, will provide materials to help you explain the appeals arrangements to them.

## **General qualifications - autumn series**

An important feature of the overall arrangements this summer is the planned additional exam series in the autumn, which will provide an opportunity for students who were unable to receive a calculated grade this summer, and others who would like the opportunity to improve their grade, to take exams.

Our consultation on the arrangements for the autumn series closed this week and we expect to publish final decisions before the end of the summer term. We received a large number of responses and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who gave us their views. We understand the logistical challenges schools and colleges will face in the autumn, and the potential for public health restrictions to impact on the

planned series. We will continue to talk to the sector, and prepare for a range of contingencies, as we finalise our approach.

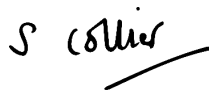
We know you will want to support all students who wish to take exams in the autumn – we and the exam boards will provide further information in good time about the next steps.

### **2021 exams and assessments**

We recognise students expecting to take exams next year, and their parents and teachers, are concerned about the disruption to teaching and learning caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Our overriding aim is to ensure exams and assessments are as fair as possible and take into account any public health requirements and the well-being of students. We are working closely with the Department for Education, exam boards and groups representing teachers, schools, colleges and students, to carefully consider a range of possible measures. We are planning to publish for consultation, before the end of term, our proposals for next year. We will confirm our decisions as soon as possible to allow time for you to prepare.

I know that these are challenging times in which we are all working together to ensure this year's results – and ongoing exams and assessments - are as fair as possible. May I take this opportunity to thank you again, I look forward to continuing to work together in the months ahead.

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, Ofqual