

# **Appeals for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2017 exam series**

Background information accompanying statistical  
release



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# Contents

Information about the statistics.....	3
Purpose.....	3
Geographical coverage.....	3
Description.....	3
The review of marking process.....	5
Appeals.....	5
The Examination Procedures Review Service.....	6
Context.....	7
Data source.....	7
Limitations.....	7
Revisions.....	7
Confidentiality and rounding.....	7
Quality assurance.....	8
Status.....	8
Related publications.....	8
Statistical policies.....	9
Glossary.....	9
Useful links.....	9
Feedback.....	9

# Information about the statistics

## Purpose

In this release, Ofqual presents data on all preliminary appeals and appeal hearings (formerly known as 'stage 1' appeals and 'stage 2' appeals and collectively referred to as 'appeals') requested for all GCSE and GCE (AS and A level) assessments taken during the summer 2017 exam series.

## Geographical coverage

The accompanying report presents data on the number of appeals in England. Reports published in previous years included data for students in Wales and Northern Ireland as well. As such, historical figures in this year's report reflect England only data and may therefore differ from previously published figures.

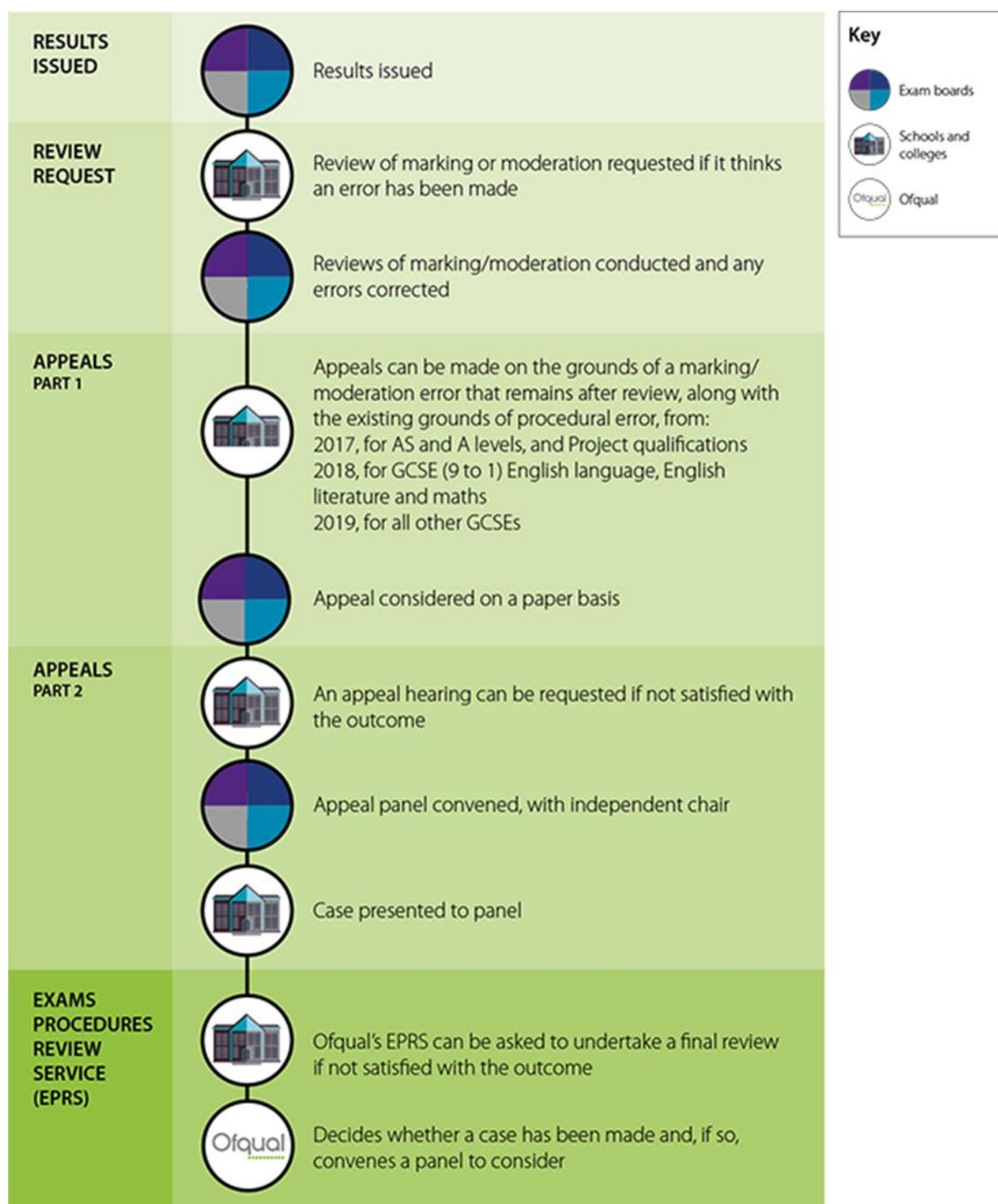
For this, and all other releases for the academic year 2016/17, Ofqual will publish separate data tables for students in Wales and Northern Ireland without commentary, in addition to data tables and report for England. This is following a [transition arrangement](#) with Qualifications Wales (the regulator in Wales) and CCEA (the regulator in Northern Ireland) whereby the responsibility for publishing data for students in Wales and Northern Ireland for the academic year 2017/18 and beyond has been passed to Qualifications Wales and CCEA respectively.

Five exam boards offer GCSE and GCE qualifications in England, Wales and/or Northern Ireland:

- AQA Education (AQA)
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- Pearson Education Ltd. (Pearson)
- WJEC-CBAC Ltd. (WJEC)

## Description

The reviews and appeals system for GCSEs, AS and A levels has a number of stages, illustrated in the diagram below.



[Source: Ofqual](#)

## The review of marking process

Ofqual has published requirements for GCSE and GCE qualifications which set out our expectations for how exam boards carry out reviews of marking, moderation and appeals. Exam boards must meet these rules and publish detailed information and guidance for schools and colleges on their arrangements for reviews of marking, moderation and appeals following the issue of results.

Exam boards issue results for summer exams in August. If a school or college is concerned about the accuracy of a candidate's result or a group of candidates' results, it can ask the exam board to review the marking or moderation undertaken. Until recently the process by which schools raised concerns about results was known as the 'enquiry about results' process. More information on [reviews of marking for the summer 2017 series](#) was published by Ofqual in December 2017.

The review of marking requirements set by Qualification Wales for qualifications taken in Wales and set by CCEA Regulator for qualifications taken in Northern Ireland are similar to those set by Ofqual. These new requirements are likely to have impacted the number of reviews requested and the outcomes of the reviews from summer 2016 onwards in England and Wales and from summer 2017 in Northern Ireland. These include all reviews conducted by AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC. CCEA continues to operate the process for enquiries about results and appeals described in the [GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice](#) for GCSEs and GCEs (the Code) This means that some of the review of marking requirements in place are different for CCEA and so their figures are not directly comparable with those from AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC.

## Appeals

If a school is unsatisfied with the result of a review of marking, review of moderation, a malpractice decision, or a judgement on reasonable adjustment or special considerations, it can make an appeal to the exam board. Private students are the exception, the *GCSE and GCE Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements* (the Conditions) covering GCSE ([A\\* to G](#) and [9 to 1](#)) and A level and AS ([legacy](#) and [reformed](#)) qualifications require exam boards to accept appeals requests directly from private students. An appeal can be in relation to the outcomes of one or more candidates, if they are all thought to be affected by the same issue. For GCSE qualifications, appeals against reviews of marking and reviews of moderation decisions are only allowed where a school or college believes there has been a procedural failure by the exam board. In these cases they need to show the exam board had not applied its procedures consistently or followed them correctly or fairly.

For GCE qualifications, the grounds on which a result can be appealed have been extended, so an appeal can be made on the basis of a marking or moderation error. Exam boards were required to pilot these extended grounds in 2016 in three GCE

subjects: physics, religious studies and geography. The pilot found that the additional grounds of appeal provided a better opportunity for errors in marking to be identified and corrected. In 2017 for all GCE subjects, schools and colleges could appeal the mark a student was given if they believe a marking or moderation error was not corrected when the original result was reviewed or if they think there was an error in the review itself. They could appeal if they think the exam board has made a procedural error too.

Schools and colleges may submit appeals regarding an exam board's decisions about malpractice if, they believe the exam board's procedures were not followed, new evidence has come to light or, the decision was unreasonable given existing evidence or they believe the sanction was disproportionate. Schools and colleges may also submit appeals related to reasonable adjustments and special consideration if they believe due procedures have not been followed correctly.

The exam boards have all decided to put in place a two stage appeals process:

- a preliminary appeal (formally referred to as a 'stage 1' appeal) is a review of the case by a senior member of the exam board who has not been involved previously with the particular case.
- an appeal hearing (formally referred to as a 'stage 2' appeal) applicants and exam boards present their case to a panel, which the exam board convenes. The panel comprises at least three members, one of whom must be independent (that means someone who is not, and has not at any time during the previous five years, been a member of the board or its committees, or an employee or examiner at the exam board). A school or college can request an appeal hearing only after going through a preliminary appeal.

Although Ofqual's Conditions do not require it, in 2017, exam boards committed to complete a preliminary appeal in 5 calendar weeks and an appeal hearing with 10 calendar days from the receipt of the request for an appeal hearing (previously the target was 50 days for either process). In some cases appeals are not resolved in the target timescale. Sometimes, this occurs to allow a fair appeal hearing with appropriate evidence, and for individuals to be present from both the school or college and the exam board.

## **The Examination Procedures Review Service**

If a school or college is still dissatisfied with the outcome following an appeal, it can apply to the Examination Procedures Review Service (EPRS) within 21 days of receiving the outcome from the exam board. The EPRS is provided by Ofqual. Ofqual will review each application and arrange a review hearing if appropriate. Ofqual will look at whether the exam board has followed the appropriate procedures and used them properly and fairly. Ofqual will only look at whether or not the rules

about the exam, how it was marked and how the qualification was graded, have been properly followed. If the exam board has not followed its own procedures or has not secured the outcomes required by Ofqual's regulations and a candidate had been disadvantaged, the application to EPRS may be allowed. Exam boards must give due regard to the outcome of EPRS hearings, both in respect of results issued to the candidate making the application and, where appropriate, other potentially affected results.

You can find further details of the review and appeals process on [Ofqual's website](#).

## **Context**

When considering the data presented in this release, it is important to note a number of recent changes to qualifications and requirements for marking reviews that are likely to have affected these figures. For more information on the reviews of marking, qualifications reforms, malpractice, special consideration and other related factors influencing this release, please see the section on related publications on page 8.

## **Data source**

AQA, CCEA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC provide data on appeals requested for all GCSE and GCE (all full courses, short courses, applied and double awards) assessments taken during the summer series in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on an annual basis.

Prior to summer 2017, the exam boards provided aggregated data on appeals to Ofqual. This means that the figures reported for 2014 to 2016 were calculated by each exam board and where totals are reported across all exam boards, Ofqual has calculated these using the data provided. From the summer 2017 series onwards, the exam boards have and will continue to provide Ofqual with data for each appeal received. Therefore, all the 2017 figures reported have been calculated by Ofqual.

## **Limitations**

Ofqual cannot guarantee that the data sent are correct, although it expects exam boards to send correct data. Summary data is sent to exam boards for checking and confirmation. The figures reported in this release reflect the status of appeals at the data cut-off date of the 16 February 2018.

## **Revisions**

Once published, data are not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or to correct an error.

## **Confidentiality and rounding**

The number of appeals and grades have not been rounded unless they were less than or equal to 3 as rounding would negatively impact interpretability of the statistics

due to the low number of cases. The figures between 1 and 3 have been denoted as 0~ and 0 represents zero value.

The number of certificates and entries have been rounded to the nearest 5.

## Quality assurance

Quality assurance procedures are carried out as explained in the [Quality Assurance Framework for Statistical Publications](#) published by Ofqual to ensure the accuracy of the data and to challenge or question it, where necessary. Ofqual continuously manages this process by:

- ensuring that data providers are clear about what is required of them – a process helped by ensuring that providers are fully consulted during the initial design phase and for any subsequent change
- reminding all providers (if appropriate) that, as a condition of them being regulated, all data must be completely accurate
- being alert to unexpected changes in the data submitted by comparing individual returns over time from the same provider
- actively challenging any unexpected results with the data providers
- having a proportionate data-auditing framework in place, allowing for auditing of providers' information collection, collation and delivery processes as necessary

The publication may be deferred if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

## Status

These statistics are classified as official statistics.

## Related publications

A number of other statistical releases and publications relate to this one:

- [Reviews of marking and moderation for GCSE, AS and A Level: summer 2017 exam series](#): this statistical release published by Ofqual provides an analysis of the results of requests for reviews of marking for GCSE, AS and A levels in summer 2017 exam series.
- [Malpractice for GCSE and A level: summer 2017 exam series](#): this statistical release published by Ofqual provides an analysis of the malpractice cases and sanctions for GCSE, AS and A levels in summer 2017 exam series.
- [Access arrangements for GCSE and A Level: 2016 to 2017 academic year](#): this statistical release published by Ofqual provides information on the number of access arrangements approved for GCSE, AS and A levels in England during the 2016 to 2017 academic year.
- [Special consideration in GCSE and A Level: summer 2017 exam series](#): this statistical release published by Ofqual provides information on the number of



adjustments to the marks of candidates for GCSE, AS and A levels during the 2016 to 2017 academic year who have been not been able to demonstrate attainment because of exceptional circumstances.

## **Statistical policies**

The [policies and procedures](#) that Ofqual follow for production and release of its statistical releases are available publicly.

## **Glossary**

Definitions of important terms used in this release are [available online](#).

## **Useful links**

The [report and data tables](#) accompanying this release are available separately.

## **Feedback**

We welcome your feedback on our publications. Should you have any comments on this statistical release and how to improve it to meet your needs, please contact us at [statistics@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:statistics@ofqual.gov.uk).

We wish to make our publications widely accessible. Please contact us at [publications@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:publications@ofqual.gov.uk) if you have any specific accessibility requirements.



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