



**Notes**

Board Briefing

**Time and venue**

12.45pm by Microsoft Teams

**Date**

Tuesday, 11 August 2020

**Attendees**

Board

Susan Barratt

Ian Bauckham

Delroy Beverley

Sally Collier

Chief Regulator

Hywel Jones

Catherine McClellan

Dame Christine Ryan

Roger Taylor

Chair

Mike Thompson

Matt Tee

Frances Wadsworth

Ofqual

Phil Beach

Executive Director, Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Niamh Field

Board Secretary

Richard Garrett

Director of Policy and Strategic Relationships General Qualifications

Daniel Gutteridge

Director of Legal

Michael Hanton

Director of Strategy and Markets

Matthew Humphrey

Director of Legal Moderation and Enforcement

Cath Jadhav

Director of Standards and Comparability

Kate Keating

Director of Communications

Michelle Meadows

Executive Director, Strategy, Risk and Research

Sean Pearce

Chief Operating Officer

Julie Swan

Executive Director for General Qualifications

Anona White

Private Secretary to the Chief Regulator

**1 Welcome and apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Lesley Davies.

**2 Update on Summer awarding**

The meeting had been convened at short notice to consider options which had been raised earlier that morning by the Secretary of State for Education (SoS) to address declining public confidence in calculated grades and the events in Scotland. They were that centre assessment grades (CAGs) could be issued or individual appeals against the calculated grade could be permitted, or a mock exam result could be awarded in place of the calculated grade if that mock result was higher than the calculated grade. Ofqual was not in possession of a policy position from the Department at this time.

*This section has been redacted, as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

The Board noted that this was a difficult position for Ofqual. The Board had previously received legal advice concerning the SoS' power of direction and Ofqual's duties in that regard. It was noted that DfE was also seeking to improve the public's understanding of the existing appeal options.

It was noted that the SoS had indicated a preference for a fast track way for students to receive their mock result instead of their calculated grade, if the mock result was higher and for the process to be completed by 7 September 2020. The Board considered whether this could be accommodated within the existing provisions for appeals or whether a further targeted consultation could be undertaken.

The Board emphasised that there was no standard or consistent approach to mocks (called trial exams in some centres) across schools and colleges nationwide. In many cases students' work would no longer be available. To have any legitimacy, schools would have to sign a declaration to say their mock data was reliable and that the assessments had taken place under controlled conditions. The Board discussed that this approach could undermine the currency of the qualifications. It was, however, noted that the approach could benefit outlier candidates.

The Board noted that private candidates would be further disadvantaged by these proposals, as many would not have had the opportunity to take a mock assessment under controlled conditions. Other students would have missed their mock because of illness. It also noted that concerns had been raised in consideration of the guidance for centre assessment grades because students are not equally motivated to perform well in mock exams. In addition, CAGs were signed off by two teachers whereas mock results were only approved by one, giving rise to potential concerns about the objectivity of marking.

It was noted that in Scotland, where a similar approach to calculated grades had been used, the Scottish First Minister had said that '*Students feel they got the wrong grade*'. Whilst Ofqual had made provision for appeals in a number of scenarios, it had not allowed for appeals because a student felt their grade was wrong – instead objective evidence was required. The Board expressed its view

that if mocks were to provide a route of appeal any new grade should be no higher than the CAG because in most centres the mock results, where done, would have been a key piece of evidence in determining the CAG.

The Board noted that the reference to mock results and exams would need to be clearly defined as there was no consistent approach nationwide. There would need to be assurance, through a signed undertaking by the Head of Centre, that a robust internal assessment had been undertaken. It was noted that the approach could be burdensome for some schools and the Board was reminded that the Education Select Committee had been concerned about the accessibility of any appeal route to all.

The Board suggested that Ofqual could present to the SoS the alternative, in light of the unique circumstances presented by Covid19 and for this year only, of issuing unregulated qualifications based on centre assessments. This had the advantage of making clear to everyone (universities, employers etc) what the status of the qualifications were so that they could make their own decisions. The Chief Regulator agreed to present this to the SoS.

As it was not clear exactly how any 'mock appeals' process would work, the Board briefly considered the implications of a number of possible approaches.

In summary, the Board's views were that an individual appeal on the basis of a mock result would not be possible, but an individual could ask a centre to appeal on the basis that there was reason to believe the result issued to the student was wrong, and that reason could be informed by a mock grade. Such an approach would require a Head of Centre declaration that the basis of the appeal was correct. Ofqual was not in a position to guarantee that the outcome grade after a successful appeal would be the mock grade, but a mock grade could be submitted as part of the evidence for an appeal. The Board were minded that the CAG would be the ceiling grade for any outcome of an appeal.

The Board agreed that it should consider further use of a mock-based appeal route. One Board member voted against given concern about the reliability of the evidence that would be available.

The meeting ended at 14.13pm.