

June 25th 2021

Re: Summer 2021: Results appeals process

Dear Parents, Carers, Pupils and Students,

I am writing to let you know about the next stages in the national process for the awarding of final qualification grades, and details of the appeals process that has been put in place. This is a lengthy document, a consequence of the national process being very long-winded.

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

Grades this summer were based on Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) (the majority of organisations, including the Department for Education (DfE) have referred to them as Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs)). This is a misnomer, as several stages of work, up to and including at whole school level, have been undertaken before recommending grades to the exam boards, hence our insistence on calling them CAGs). CAGs were submitted to the exam boards by us as a holistic assessment of candidate performance in a subject, following a rigorous process of assessment, moderation and quality assurance.

These grades were then approved by the relevant exam board, following external quality assurance checks.

In some cases, the CAGs we submitted may have been reviewed by the exam board, who may have asked us to submit an alternative grade. However, any changes to the grades we submitted were done by professional teachers or reviewers; this year no grades have been changed as a result of an algorithm.

2. What do I do if I'm not happy with my/my child's grade?

All Y11 pupils and Y13 students have the opportunity to appeal against 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 candidate puts in an appeal and their grade is lowered, they will receive the lower grade as the final outcome on their certificate.

There is also the option to resit GCSEs, A levels and some AS levels in the autumn, which may be preferable to some pupils and students. The design, content and assessment of these papers will be the same as in a normal year.

3. What are the grounds for appeal?

There are five main grounds for appeal, as dictated by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). They are:

- You think we have made an **administrative error**: an example of this would be putting the wrong information into a 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 have been told you should have received extra time for assessments but this was not given in a certain subject.
- You think the **academic judgement on the selection of evidence was unreasonable**: you think the evidence used to devise the grade was not reasonable.
- You think the **academic judgement on the grade you were given was unreasonable**.

4. 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 reviewers will **not** remark or grade candidate's evidence. Instead, they will look to see whether any teacher acting reasonably could have arrived at the same grade.

5. 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 pupil/student's **grade may go up, stay the stay, or go down**. When placing an appeal the candidate 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 CAG.

6. What is a priority appeal?

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**.

Priority appeals will be handled more quickly than other appeals, where possible before UCAS's advisory deadline of September 8th 2021.

If you decided not to confirm a firm conditional offer and to go through clearing after results day instead, JCQ cannot offer you a priority appeal.

JCQ cannot offer priority appeals for GCSE pupils.

When making a priority appeal, Y13 students will have to include their UCAS number so it can be confirmed that it is a genuine priority appeal.

7. What should I do if I don't get into my first choice of university?

Firstly, do not panic. Speak to us about your options. You may wish to go through clearing, or sit the autumn exams or summer exams next year to try to improve your grade.

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

8. What should I do before appealing?

All candidates **must** read the JCQ Student and Parent guide before appealing, which will be available on the JCQ website by results days (August 10th for Y13 and August 12th for Y11).

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.

9. What are the two stages of an appeal?

1. All appeals, on any of the grounds above, must first go through a **centre review**. 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 the candidate 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 before making a final decision.

2. Following the outcome of a centre review, candidates may still choose to pursue an **awarding organisation appeal**. Following receipt of the request from a candidate, we will then send it on their behalf to the exam boards. Pupils/Students and parents/carers 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 candidates when made.

10. How do I make an appeal?

All appeals must be made by completing the relevant sections of the JCQ Appeals found [here](#) (JCQ Appeals-Guidance Summer-2021 Appendix-B.pdf) and sending it for the attention of Mr N. Parker (Deputy Head – Curriculum) and Mrs H. Smith (Exams Officer) via this email address exams2021@nts.cumbria.sch.uk.

Centre review: Candidates must complete all parts of ‘stage 1’ on the JCQ form and send it to us.

Awarding organisation appeal: Following the outcome of the centre review, if candidates wish to progress their appeal to an awarding organisation appeal, they must complete all parts of ‘stage 2’ of the JCQ form, and send it to us.

Please note that staff may not necessarily be in school, hence you should send your appeal via email only to the ‘exams2021’ address given above.

11. What are the deadlines for priority appeals?

Priority appeals (for Y13 only) requesting a centre review can be made from August 10th 2021 (results day), until **no later than August 16th 2021** (students cannot appeal before results day).

We aim to complete the priority appeal centre review by August 20th 2021*.

Following the outcome of the centre review, if students wish to progress their appeal to the awarding organisation appeal, the request must be made by **no later than 23rd August 2021**.

*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.

12. 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 same process using the JCQ form sent to the 'exams2021' email address is required.

Non-priority appeals requesting a centre review can be made from August 12th 2021 (Y11 results day), until **no later than September 3rd 2021** (candidates cannot appeal before results day).

We aim to complete the centre review by September 10th 2021.

Following the outcome of the centre review, if candidates wish to progress their appeal to the awarding organisation appeal, the request must be made by **no later than September 17th 2021**.

13. You already know my child's grades. Why can't you tell us? What if you know we haven't met our next destination offer?

We are forbidden from disclosing the CAGs to any third party, including pupils/students and parents/carers, until results days. Any teacher or member of staff who does this is committing exam malpractice.

Although pupils/students may have been given marks or grades on single pieces of evidence, we cannot disclose the final submitted CAG.

During the external quality assurance process taking place in June/July 2021, our submitted CAGs may be moved up or down (exam boards have access to the national database of CAGs; as a single school, we do not).

We only know what university offer has been made if a Y13 student has chosen to share that information with us. Likewise, for Y11s making applications to college, other school sixth forms or apprenticeships. We only know if a Y11 pupils CAGs will not necessarily enable them to meet the entry criteria for our own Sixth Form.

Regardless of the scenario, the needs of the next destination offer has, quite rightly, not formed part of our objective grading of pupils and students. Where we do know this information, exam malpractice rules still apply, and we must not let candidates know their submitted CAGs, even if they haven't met the conditions of their next destination offer.

14. Finally...

As you can see, it's a complex process. To keep things simple, and to ensure communication is dealt with as swiftly as possible, please only use exams2021@nts.cumbria.sch.uk for queries about results this summer.

As I write, the intention is to run both results days as we would in a normal year, and this detail has already been sent to you. If there is a change (this will only be due to a Covid-related restriction being imposed upon us), we'll contact you via Parent Mail and through an update on the school website.

It is the expectation that requests for appeals will be rare and in exceptional circumstances. This is because our process for calculating CAGs has been thorough, robust, fair, reasonable and entirely evidence based. It has been approved by the examining bodies, and I am confident that the on-going external quality assurance of our CAG data will be completed without issue.

As always, if you have any queries about anything related to CAGs 2021, please do get in touch.

I wish you all a safe, healthy and happy summer.

Yours sincerely,

Mr N. Parker

Deputy Head - Curriculum