

GCSE results: Key Q&As for Students

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1. This addresses various questions that may be being asked by students on GCSE results day (20 August 2020). This article includes various hyperlinks to websites. Please refer to our [A Level advice guide](#) if you remain concerned about those results.
2. This year is a year like no other. Students have found out how they performed in exams they did not even sit. The Department for Education (“DfE”) changed its approach in a major U-turn five days after the A Level results were released.
3. The switch to centre assessment grades (rather than the standardised/moderated grades) will apply to both AS and A levels and to GCSE results.
4. The DfE has stated in a press release that:

“Students awaiting their GCSE grades on Thursday will receive their centre assessment grade from their school ... If students’ calculated grades were higher than the centre assessment grade, their calculated grade will stand.

5. The DfE has also said that **“schools and colleges will receive students’ final GCSE grades on Wednesday 19 August 2020, meaning they will be available to young people on Thursday as planned.”**
6. There may, however, be some delays. Be prepared for this. The latest information from the DfE is that all GCSE results will be released on Thursday 20 August 2020, the day that students should have received results had they sat exams. Those expecting BTec results, unfortunately, must wait a little longer. This is because the algorithm used to calculate A Level and GCSE results was not used in the majority of vocational qualifications and technical qualifications, including BTecs. Pearson, the exam body that award BTecs, will

be re-grading the grades given. Nick Gibb MP has said that he is hopeful students will get their BTec results next week.

7. It is fair to say that any further delay in issuing grades will have a knock-on impact on schools and colleges who would normally start their enrolment process after results are issued. It is sensible therefore, to get in touch with your future school/college and ask them how they are handling delayed results. More tips on this are set out below.

What GCSE grade should I receive?

8. The grade you receive on 20 August 2020 should be the higher of either:
 - a. Your centre assessed grade
 - b. Your standardised / moderated grade

What do I do if my centre assessed grade or standardised grade is still not enough to get me to where I need to go next?

- *Call your college or sixth form or future employer or over the next few days via phone or email using its "contact us" page.*
- *If you cannot get through, send an email to their admissions department asking for clarity on how they will be dealing with GCSE results, leaving your phone number (and perhaps that of a parent/carer who is with you)*
- *If this applies - explain that your grades are below the grades you were expected to obtain*
- *Ask whether they will still offer you a place*
- *If they cannot give you this information yet, ask for a timeframe for a response. This may be several days.*
- *If your teachers or you think that your centre might appeal the grades received by your cohort, because of issues with how they arrived at your centre assessed grade, for instance, tell the school/college/employer this and tell them that you will keep them informed.*
- *Stay calm! Many students will be in the same boat and the government is under pressure to make this fair for all of you.*

- *Be prepared to wait and keep an eye on the Ofqual and DfE websites. You will need to be patient, but also you will need to be ready to keep seeking updates from your college/school/employer and getting in regular contact.*
- *Ask your centre to submit an appeal on your behalf*
- *Issue a subject access request (see below)*

What is the appeal process?

9. Appeals guidance

The very latest Ofqual GCSE guidance (released on 20 August) is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/guide-to-gcse-results-for-england-2020>

10. Ofqual has also updated its formal appeals guidance **Extraordinary regulatory framework: General Qualifications, COVID-19 Conditions and Requirements**. It did so on 14 August and again on 19 August 2020. Please make sure that you are looking at the latest version of this guidance when considering appeals.

11. The General Qualifications “GQ” Conditions (“GQCov Conditions”) apply to all general qualifications, including GCSEs.

(Please note that these guidance documents are very likely to change again over the coming days.)

- For students in England, information about the appeals process is set out in the guidance by **Ofqual**. This was last changed on 19 August 2020. Please check for changes.
- For students in Northern Ireland, information about the appeals process will be published by **CCEA** on their website in due course
- For students in Wales, the appeals process is set out in guidance by **Qualifications Wales**
- For students in Scotland, the appeals process is set out in guidance by the **Scottish Qualifications Authority**

Support phonelines

Exam Results Helpline

- Telephone 0800 100 900
- nationalcareers.service.gov.uk

The Exam Results Helpline can provide information on appeals, complaints, or what your next steps may be once you've received your results.

Ofqual

- Telephone 0300 303 3344
- Contact the Ofqual student support phoneline if you want to find out more about how you were graded, the autumn exams series, how to make an appeal or raise a concern about bias or discrimination.

The Mix (mental health support)

- If you're under 25, you can call [The Mix](https://www.themix.org.uk) on 0808 808 4994 (Sunday-Friday 2pm–11pm) request support by email [using this form on The Mix website](#) or [use their crisis text messenger service](#).

On what grounds can an appeal be brought?

12. The Appeals guidance for students was updated on 19 August 2020. This explains as follows:

GCSE, AS, A level, extended project qualification and advanced extension award: what to do if you're unhappy with your results

- "First of all, you should speak to your school or college. It's important that you understand on what basis you can and can't appeal your results when deciding your next steps. Only your school or college can submit an appeal on your behalf."

I think there might have been a mistake when my school or college submitted my centre assessment grade

- "You can ask your school or college to check whether it made an administrative error when submitting your centre assessment grade or rank order information. Administrative errors might include, for example, mixing up 2 students with

similar names, or accidentally copying across the wrong data, but do not relate to the professional judgements of centres in giving centre assessment grades. If your school or college thinks it made a mistake, it can submit an appeal to the exam board, but it must be supported by clear evidence that an error had been made.

I don't agree with the centre assessment grade that I was given by my teachers

- Your school or college submitted the grades it believes you were most likely to achieve if exams had gone ahead. We know many students wanted to be able to challenge their centre assessment grades if they were unhappy with them, but we judged this could not be done consistently and fairly. Any appeal would have to be decided by someone better placed than your teachers to judge your likely grade if exams had taken place. Because exams were cancelled, we don't think there is such a person. This means you can't appeal your grade just because you don't agree with the centre assessment grade submitted by your school or college.
- Your school or college can't appeal against the centre assessment grades that they decided were correct when they submitted it to the exam board. The head of centre made a declaration to confirm that the centre assessment grades it provided were the grades its students were most likely to have received if the exams had gone ahead.
- If you'd like an opportunity to improve your grade, you can choose to sit exams in the autumn, or in summer 2021, instead. If you have concerns about bias, discrimination or something else that suggests that your school or college did not behave with care or integrity when determining your centre assessment grade, see 'student guide to appeals, malpractice & maladministration complaints'."

13. Deadline for appeal: 17 September 2020

14. More technically, appeals are covered by the Ofqual guidance: "Condition GQCov5 Appeals".

- a. **GQCov5.1** In respect of each result that it issues under Condition GQCov3.1, an awarding organisation must establish, maintain and comply with an appeals process which provides only for an appeal to the awarding organisation on the basis –

(a) that the awarding organisation did not apply procedures consistently or that procedures were not followed properly and fairly,

(b) that the awarding organisation used the wrong data in applying the process set out under Condition GQCov3.2(a)(i), and that a result generated by applying the process set out under Condition GQCov3.2(a)(i) was incorrectly issued by the awarding organisation in respect of one or more Learners

- b. **GQCov5.2**

For the purposes of Condition GQCov5.1(b), 'the wrong data' –

(a) includes –

(i) incorrect data provided by a Centre under Condition GQCov3.2(a)(ii),

(ii) a data set other than that specified in the requirements published by Ofqual under Condition GQCov3.2(a)(i), including where the data sets in relation to two or more centres have been transposed, and

(iii) a data set specified in the requirements published by Ofqual under Condition GQCov3.2(a)(i) into which errors have been introduced by the awarding organisation, and

(b) does not include a data set specified in the requirements published by Ofqual under Condition GQCov3.2(a)(i) which contains errors or omissions that were not introduced by the awarding organisation.

15. Appeals on the basis of you being a high performing student (but this not being reflected in your standardised grades) therefore need to be on the basis that the use of a default data set would not be a reliable basis to calculate results for one or more of its high or low ability students in the 2020 cohort – those at the top or bottom of the rank order, for example. On that basis, if a centre/ school considers that the historical attainment data from the relevant previous cohorts is not a reliable basis for calculating a student's results

it can request an appeal with the relevant awarding organisation on that basis under *Condition GQCov5.1(b)*.

16. It will then be for each of the awarding organisations to decide whether or not any such appeal should be allowed. Under *Condition GQCov5.4(a)*, an awarding organisation may charge a fee for an appeal. This provision provides a power for awarding organisations rather than imposing an obligation.

17. As such, it will be for each awarding organisation to decide whether to charge for an appeal. We do not know yet whether all will do so, though the Education Secretary said that schools should not face a fee.

Centres' duties to students/learners

18. Schools are also under duties to ensure that you are not left in the dark about your grades or how to appeal them:

- An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that a Centre has in place effective arrangements for a Learner to —
 - (a) apply to the Centre for it to request —
 - (i) information under Condition GQCov4.1, and (ii) an appeal on the Learner's behalf under Condition GQCov5, and,
 - (b) appeal any decision by the Centre that such a request should not be made, and for the Centre to determine that appeal.
- **GQCov6.2** For the purposes of this condition, an awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that —
 - (a) the Centre makes Learners aware of the arrangements it has in place prior to the issue of results under Condition GQCov3.1, and
 - (b) the Centre provides Learners with a statement of the arrangements promptly when requested.

Can I obtain information about what my teachers said about me?

19. Yes. Issue a “Subject Access Request”¹ to find out information to support you in pushing for an appeal about your grades. Young people can make requests themselves, though you may be asked by the school whether you want your parent/carer involved and that you understand what is involved with this request:

- a. Under the GDPR you have the right to request information about you and your performance. This may include the teacher assessment, written comments about the centre assessed grade (CAG) or rank order, records of past performance.
- b. You do not have the right to access information you have recorded yourself. This means that you cannot get copies of your answers from mock exams, assignments or assessments.
- c. As long as the results have been announced, the organisation (for example your school or college) must respond to your request within one month.

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¹ <https://ico.org.uk/global/data-protection-and-coronavirus-information-hub/exam-script-exemption-students/>