

Appeals for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2018 exam series

Background information accompanying
statistical release

11 April 2019

ofqual

Contents

Information about the statistics	3
Purpose	3
Geographical coverage.....	3
Description	3
The review of marking process.....	4
Appeals.....	5
The Examination Procedures Review Service	6
Context.....	6
Data source.....	6
Limitations	7
Revisions.....	7
Confidentiality and rounding	7
Quality assurance	7
Status	7
Related publications	7
Useful links.....	8
Feedback	8

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 2018 exam series.

Geographical coverage

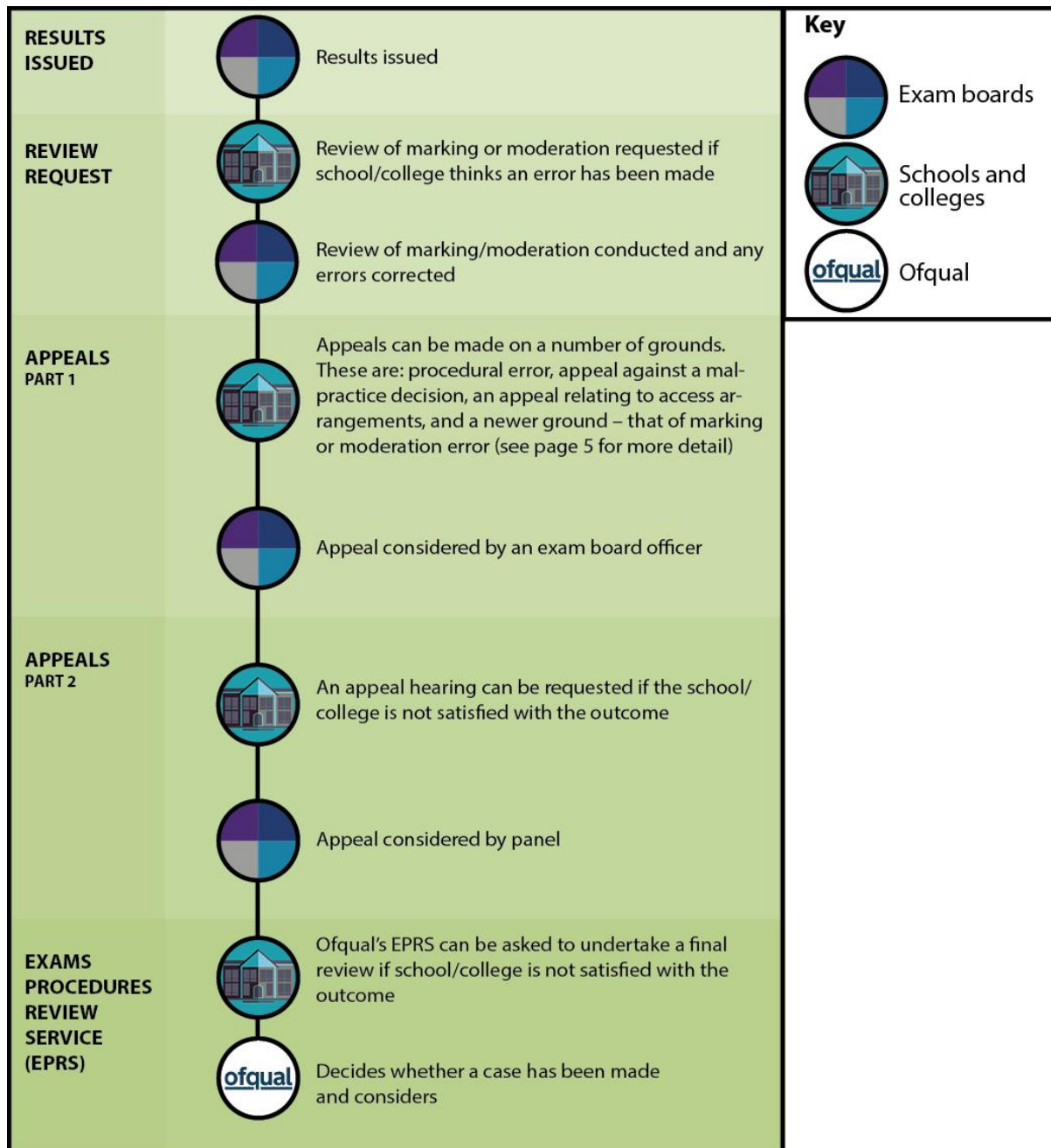
The accompanying report presents data on the number of appeals in England.

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) - prior to 2017
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- Pearson Education Ltd. (Pearson)
- WJEC-CBAC Ltd. (WJEC/Eduqas)

Description

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



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 and 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 undertaken¹. More information on [reviews of marking for the summer 2018 series](#) was published by Ofqual in December 2018.

Appeals

If a school or college is not satisfied with the result of a review of marking, review of moderation, a malpractice decision, or a judgement on reasonable adjustment or special considerations, and/or if they believe the exam board has made a procedural error, it can make an appeal to the exam board. 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 have been affected by the same issue.

For GCSE English language, English literature and mathematics 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.

Schools and colleges can submit appeals regarding an exam board's decisions about malpractice if they believe the exam board did not follow its procedures, if new evidence has come to light, if 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 the exam board did not follow its procedures.

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

- a preliminary appeal (formerly 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 (formerly referred to as a 'stage 2' appeal) involves applicants and exam boards presenting 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

¹ The process by which schools raised concerns about results was previously known as the 'enquiry about results' process

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, since 2017, exam boards have committed to complete a preliminary appeal in 5 calendar weeks and an appeal hearing with 10 calendar weeks 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, or 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 appeal outcome from the exam board. The EPRS is provided by Ofqual. Ofqual reviews each application and arranges a review hearing if appropriate. Ofqual looks at whether the exam board has followed the appropriate procedures and used them properly and fairly. Ofqual will only look at whether the rules about the exam, its marking and/or its grading 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, the application to EPRS may be upheld. 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 later in this document.

Data source

AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC/Eduqas (and previously CCEA) 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 on an annual basis.

Prior to summer 2017, the exam boards provided Ofqual with aggregated data on appeals. 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 and 2018 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 19 February 2019.

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.

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. 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 2018 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 2018 exam series.

- [Malpractice for GCSE and A level: summer 2018 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 2018 exam series.
- [Access arrangements for GCSE and A Level: 2017 to 2018 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 2017 to 2018 academic year.
- [Special consideration in GCSE and A Level: summer 2018 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 2017 to 2018 academic year who have been not been able to demonstrate attainment because of exceptional circumstances.

Useful links

- [Report and data tables](#) accompanying this release
- [Definitions](#) of important terms used in this release
- [Policies and procedures](#) that Ofqual follows for production of statistical releases

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.



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