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Regulation

Reviewing GCSE outcome data received from awarding organisations as part of the data exchange procedures November 2019

Updated 21 November 2019

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The process for awarding organisations to submit their GCSE outcome data to Ofqual in November 2019 is outlined in the data exchange procedures.

We review all GCSE outcome data and qualitative information received from awarding organisations about their awarding decisions and how they reach them.

We expect outcome data to be accompanied by an explanation and supporting evidence, as specified in the data exchange procedures document. Where we require clarification of an explanation, or additional evidence to support the explanation, we will contact the awarding organisation to request it.

We will then review each outcome and supporting evidence. The factors we will consider in conducting our review are outlined below. The questions could be applicable to any award, but not all will be applicable in every case.

Statistical indicators

Is the match rate much higher/lower than in previous exam series?

A lower match rate (the proportion of GCSE learners for whom there is prior attainment data) could mean that any predictions used are less reliable than those used in previous series.

Are there particular factors which might make any predictions used unreliable?

There may be factors other than a change in the match rates that make the predictions less reliable.

Have issues flagged by the inter-board screening been taken into account?

In the autumn awarding organisations carry out inter-board screening: a statistical review of that summer's outcomes in each GCSE subject. Inter-board screening shows whether qualification outcomes are comparable across awarding organisations and flags any outcomes where one or more awarding organisations are significantly out of line with other awarding organisations. Awarding organisations will take this information into account when awarding in the November 2019 exam series.

Has an awarding organisation used a previously agreed approach to align awarding organisation grade standards in the November 2019 series?

Ofqual and awarding organisations may have agreed an approach to aligning standards in response to issues identified with the previous series' results.

Has an awarding organisation explained what use it made of other statistical indicators to guide

outcomes?

Examiner judgement

Is there a significant mismatch between the expected and actual learner performance?

If the answer to the previous question is 'yes', is there an acceptable explanation for the mismatch?

There could be reasons, legitimately unanticipated by an awarding organisation before awarding, for learner performance diverging from the expected performance.

Has the paper or assessment worked in a different way from previous versions?

Awarding organisations may have evidence that the level of learners' performance is not in line with the statistical predictions, because performance was better or worse than expected. At the award the exam scripts reviewed (at marks in the selected range for a particular grade boundary) might show that the work seen clearly merits a higher or lower grade.

Cohort profile

We would expect convincing evidence from the awarding organisation to support any explanation that the performance of the cohort was atypical.

Is the cohort very different from cohorts in previous years?

The profile of learners entering a qualification in one year (the cohort) may be very different from the profile of the cohort in previous years.

Comparison of outcomes from previous exam series.

Taking into account any of the above categories and any other relevant factor that justifies the outcome of the award. In order to ensure comparability we will also take into account any other awards within the same subject or suite of subjects made by other awarding organisations. We review each outcome report on a case-by-case basis, considering the specific circumstances of each award and reviewing the evidence provided. In reviewing the outcomes we are guided by four key principles:

1. Public confidence in the results being issued.
2. Maintenance of standards.
3. Fairness for learners.
4. Consistency in our approach to all awarding organisations.

This process will be reviewed following the issue of GCSE results from November 2019 and any changes will be incorporated into next year's process.

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