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Official Statistics

Background information for appeals for GCSE, AS, A level and Project qualifications: 2022 to 2023 academic year

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Applies to England

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Purpose

In this release, Ofqual presents data on appeals for GCSE, AS, A level, and Project qualifications during the 2022 to 2023 academic year. The report covers all the opportunities to enter for the qualifications during the academic year: November 2022 and June 2023 for GCSE qualifications; June 2023 for AS and A level qualifications; and November 2022, January 2023 and June 2023 for Project qualifications.

Geographical coverage

The accompanying report presents data on the number of appeals in England. Four awarding organisations offer GCSE, AS, A level and Project qualifications in England:

- AQA Education (AQA)
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- Pearson Education Ltd (Pearson)
- WJEC-CBAC Ltd (WJEC/Eduqas)

While ASDAN, City and Guilds and University of the Arts London (UAL) also offer Project qualifications, no appeals were reported for their qualifications in the academic year 2022 to 2023.

Appeals in summer 2020 and summer 2021

In [summer 2020](#) and [summer 2021](#), exams were cancelled due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and, as a result, the standard post-results services, including reviews of marking, were not available and a different appeals process was in place each year. For further information on appeals arrangements in these years please see the [background notes](#) of previous publications. Due to the exceptional nature of grading and the appeals process in summer 2020 and summer 2021, comparisons of appeals in these years with other academic years are not valid.

Appeals in exam series other than summer 2020 and summer 2021

[Summer 2022](#) saw the return of exams, [with a package of support in place for students](#). The approach to grading led to overall results in 2022 being midway between results in 2021 and 2019. In the 2021 to 2022 academic year, the [standard post result services](#) were available for all exam series for the first time since the 2018 to 2019 academic year.

In the [2022 to 2023](#) academic year, assessment arrangements largely returned to normal and results in summer 2023 were broadly similar to summer 2019, reflecting a return to pre-pandemic grading.

Other than summer 2020 and summer 2021, if a school or college was not satisfied with the result of a review of marking, review of moderation, a malpractice decision, or a judgement on reasonable adjustments or special consideration, and/or if they believed the awarding organisation had made a procedural error, it could make an appeal to the awarding organisation. Please note though, the ground “review of marking or moderation - marking error” only applied to all subjects from the 2018 to 2019 academic year. Prior to this, in the 2017 to 2018 academic year, it did not apply to GCSEs other than English language, English literature and maths. The GCSE and GCE Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements ([the Conditions](#)) covering GCSE A* to G and [9 to 1](#) and [Conditions covering A level and AS legacy](#) and [reformed](#) qualifications also require awarding organisations to accept appeals requests directly from private candidates. An appeal could be in relation to the outcomes of one or more candidates, if they were all thought to have been affected by the same issue.

Schools and colleges could submit appeals regarding an awarding organisation’s decisions about malpractice if they believed the awarding organisation did not follow its procedures, the decision was unreasonable given existing evidence, the sanction was disproportionate or if new evidence came to light. Schools and colleges could also submit appeals related to reasonable adjustments and special consideration if they believed the awarding organisation did not follow its procedures.

Under JCQ rules, the awarding organisations operate a 2-stage appeals process:

1. A preliminary appeal (formerly referred to as a ‘stage 1’ appeal) is a review of the case by a senior member of the awarding organisation who has not been involved previously with the particular case.

2. An appeal hearing (formerly referred to as a 'stage 2' appeal) involves applicants and awarding organisations presenting their case to a panel, which the awarding organisation convenes. The panel comprises at least 3 members, one of whom must be independent from the awarding organisation (meaning they have not been an employee, examiner, committee or board member of the awarding organisation in the previous 5 years). A school or college can request an appeal hearing only after going through a preliminary appeal.

Although Ofqual's Conditions do not require it, in 2017, awarding organisations committed to completing a preliminary appeal in 5 calendar weeks and an appeal hearing in 10 calendar weeks from the receipt of the request for an appeal hearing (previously the target was 50 days for either process). This was extended in 2019 so the target timescale for a preliminary appeal was 6 calendar weeks and an appeal hearing remained 10 calendar weeks. 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 awarding organisation.

The Examination Procedures Review Service

If a school or college, or private candidate, is still dissatisfied with the outcome following an appeal, they can apply to Ofqual's [Examination Procedures Review Service \(EPRS\)](#) within 21 days of receiving the appeal outcome from the awarding organisation. Ofqual reviews each application and looks at whether the awarding organisation has followed the appropriate procedures and used them properly and fairly.

If the awarding organisation has not followed its own procedures or has not secured the outcomes required by Ofqual's regulations, the application to EPRS may be upheld. Awarding organisations 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.

Changes to the reporting of appeals

Prior to the 2021 to 2022 academic year, a single appeal may relate to one or more units for the qualification grade challenged. This is not relevant for summer 2020 or summer 2021 when appeals were submitted at qualification level. From the 2021 to 2022 academic year, reporting changed so that all appeals are submitted at component level. For this reason, comparisons with 2018 to 2019 and earlier academic years for the number of appeals received, upheld and associated with a grade change may not be valid and need to be treated with caution.

Data source

AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC provide data on appeals requested for all GCSE, AS, A level and

Project assessments taken during each exam series in England on an annual basis. ASDAN, City and Guilds and UAL also provide data on appeals requested for Project qualifications.

Please note that UAL offered, and submitted data for, Project qualifications for the first time in summer 2023.

Limitations

Ofqual expects awarding organisations to send correct data, although it cannot guarantee that the data sent is correct. Summary data is sent to awarding organisations for checking and confirmation. The figures reported for the summer 2023 series reflect the status of appeals at the data cut-off date of 19 February 2024. Appeals reported for the November 2022 GCSE and Project series reflect the status of appeals at the data cut-off date of 25 July 2023. Appeals reported for the January 2023 Project series reflect the status of appeals at the data cut-off date of 4 April 2024.

Revisions

Once published, data is 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 grade changes have been rounded to the nearest 5 to preserve confidentiality. The figures between 1 and 4 have been denoted as “fewer than 5” and 0 represents zero value. Total values of rows or columns are calculated using unrounded figures, so the sum of rounded figures may differ from the total reported. All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

As a result of rounded figures, the percentages (calculated on actual figures) shown in any tables may not necessarily add up to 100.

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.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the [Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\)](#). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

You are welcome to contact us directly at data.analytics@ofqual.gov.uk with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

Related publications

Other statistical releases and publications relate to this one:

- [Malpractice for GCSE and A level: summer 2023 exam series](#): this statistical release published by Ofqual provides an analysis of the malpractice cases and sanctions for GCSE, AS and A level
- [Reviews of marking and moderation: summer 2023](#) this statistical release published by Ofqual reports on the number of reviews of marking and moderation (previously known as enquiries about results) for GCSE, AS and A level
- [Special consideration in GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2023 exam series](#) this statistical release published by Ofqual reports on the number of adjustments to the marks of candidates who have not been able to demonstrate attainment because of exceptional circumstances
- [Access arrangements for GCSE, AS and A level: 2022 to 2023 academic year](#) this statistical release published by Ofqual reports on the number of approved access arrangements and the number of requests granted for modified papers for GCSE, AS and A level

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

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