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Official Statistics

Background information for reviews of marking and moderation for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2024 exam series

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Applies to England

Contents

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Purpose

In this release, Ofqual presents data on all reviews of marking, reviews of moderation and administrative error reviews (collectively referred to as 'reviews') requested for all GCSE, AS and A level assessments taken during the summer 2024 exam series.

Geographical coverage

This report presents data on the number of reviews requested in England. Four exam boards offer GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in England:

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

Description

The review of marking process

Every year, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), a membership organisation of 8 awarding organisations, including the 4 exam boards in England offering GCSE, AS and A levels, publish information and guidance for schools and colleges on the post-results services available for the relevant exam series. The GCSE, and AS and A level Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements (the Conditions) published by Ofqual, outline the requirements for reviews of marking, reviews of moderation, and administrative error reviews that exam boards must follow for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications.

If a school or college or an individual student is concerned that an error has occurred when assessment material has been marked or moderated, the school or college can decide to seek a review from the exam board. Exam boards only accept review requests through schools and colleges, and not from students. Schools and colleges require consent from the student to request reviews of marking and administrative error reviews. Private students are the exception; the Conditions for GCSE and AS and A level require exam boards to accept review requests directly from private students.

A whole qualification (for example A level English literature) will comprise of several components, for example, one or more exams, and/or one or more non-examination assessment (NEA) components. Reviews are requested for each component individually and not for the qualification as a whole. Reviews can be requested for multiple components that a student has taken for the same qualification. This is why the total number of qualification grades challenged is always lower than the total number of reviews of marking. Reviews of moderation are different, as one review involves multiple students. However, the vast majority of reviews requested are reviews of marking and so, overall, the number of grades challenged is always lower than the number of reviews requested.

In some cases, multiple reviews are requested for the same component, for example, an administrative error review may be requested and then a review of marking. Where a component is made up of more than one part (known as sub-components) and a student must complete all sub-components to complete the component (for example, an exam with a multiple-choice element and a written element), a review can be made on an individual sub-component in some cases.

If the review shows that marking or administrative errors have been made and the student's mark is incorrect, the exam board is required to change the mark to correct the error. This can lead to a student's mark increasing or decreasing.

Mark changes in this report refer to changes to raw component-level marks. The raw component-level marks are the marks awarded to students on each component, prior to any scaling that might be applied. For some specifications and components the raw marks are scaled to ensure that the overall qualification marks appropriately reflect the weighting of different components.

In some cases, mark changes affect the overall qualification grade, which will then also be changed. For reviews of moderation, grades can only be confirmed or raised following review. Exam boards charge a fee if qualification grades are not changed following review, or, for a review of moderation, if the original school or college marks are not reinstated.

Ofqual's Conditions for GCSE and AS and A level state that exam boards must set their own deadlines within which they should complete reviews and report the outcome for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications. They must do so within the timeframe of 'key dates' that Ofqual has prescribed. These dates provide a common minimum window for schools and colleges and/or students and allow exam boards to set common dates if they wish – which they have so far all chosen to do. The dates the exam boards have chosen to set are detailed in the sections on each type of review below as outlined in the Joint Council for Qualifications guidelines.

Each exam board offers 3 post-results services for reviewing exam papers and non-examination assessment:

- An administrative error review for an individual component ('Service 1')
- A review of marking for an individual component ('Service 2')
- A review of moderation of the school or college's internal assessment using the sample of students' work that was used in the initial moderation ('Service 3')

Under Ofqual rules, students must also be given the opportunity by an exam board to seek a review of the mark that their school or college determines for their non-examination assessment, prior to the mark being submitted to the exam board. Exam boards do not collect data on such reviews and they are not included in this report.

Administrative error review of an individual student's script

The exam board checks the script to make sure that every question has been

marked and the total number of marks awarded for that script is correctly added up and recorded. This year exam boards stipulated that schools and colleges must have requested this service by 26 September 2024. The deadline set by exam boards by which they must aim to notify schools and colleges about the outcomes of administrative error reviews is 10 calendar days from the date of receipt.

Review of marking for an individual component

A reviewer considers the marking of the original examiner to determine, in respect of each task in the component for which marks could have been awarded, whether there are any marking errors. The exam board also conducts a full administrative error review if this has not been previously requested for the component. Exam boards typically operate 2 priority levels:

- Priority – schools and colleges can request this if the student's place in further or higher education depends on the outcome of a review or if a quick response is desired. Exam boards stipulated that requests for a priority service 2 review must have been submitted by 22 August 2024.
- Non-priority – exam boards stipulated that schools and colleges must have requested this by 26 September 2024.

All exam boards offer priority reviews of marking for AS and A level. However, only Pearson currently offer this service for GCSE.

The deadline set by exam boards by which they must aim to notify schools and colleges about the outcomes of reviews of marking is 20 calendar days for the non-priority service and 15 calendar days for the priority service from the date of receipt.

Review of moderation of the school or college's internal assessment using the sample of students' work

A review of moderation service is not available for individual students. It is requested by a school or college and undertaken on a sample of students' work that was originally marked by teachers at that school or college. The exam board reviews the initial moderation to make sure that the moderation was carried out correctly and in accordance with the marking criteria and/or if there were any errors made in any

adjustments to the original marks as a result of the moderation. Marks must be corrected if an error is found in the judgements made by the original moderator and/or if there are any errors in any adjustments made to the original marks as a result of the moderation.

Exam boards stipulated that this service must have been requested by 26 September 2024. The deadline set by exam boards by which they must aim to notify schools and colleges about the outcomes of reviews of moderation is 35 calendar days from the moderator receiving the original sample of work from the school or college.

Appeals

If a school or college has requested a review but is still dissatisfied with the outcome, it can make an appeal to the exam board. There is also a final stage available through the Ofqual Examination Procedures Review Service.

Ofqual publishes statistical releases on appeals. Data on appeals for the 2023 to 2024 academic year will be published in Spring 2025.

Context

When considering the data presented in this release, it is important to note several changes to qualifications and requirements for reviews of marking that are likely to have impacted on these figures. Therefore, any comparisons between the figures this year and previous years should be made with caution as arrangements for assessment and grading were not the same.

In summer 2020 and summer 2021, exams were cancelled due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Therefore, no reviews of marking or moderation took place and there is no data presented for these years.

Summer 2022 saw the return of formal exams and assessments, as well as the review of marking and moderation process. For summer 2022, exams and other formal assessments went ahead with some planned adaptations intended to recognise the disruption to education caused by the pandemic, and grading was at a midpoint between summer 2021 and 2019.

In [summer 2023](#), there was a return to pre-pandemic grading and grading continued as normal in summer 2024. Further information is available in the [Ofqual guide for schools and colleges](#), the [Ofqual student guide 2024](#) and our [news story on summer 2024 grading](#).

Changes to the review of marking process

Ofqual [Conditions for GCSE](#) and [AS and A level](#) specify the requirements for reviews of marking and moderation that exam boards offering qualifications in England must follow:

- A mark must only be changed following an administrative error review, a review of marking or a review of moderation if an error occurred. The reason for a change of mark must be recorded.
- Exam boards must have their own review processes and publish these.
- Exam boards are required to train reviewers (including those undertaking reviews of moderation) prior to undertaking reviews and monitor their performance as reviewers.

From summer 2022 onwards, [Ofqual rules](#) required exam boards to make marked GCSE scripts available to schools and colleges before their deadline for requesting a review of marking. This change was intended to increase the information that schools and colleges had to identify potential marking errors and inform their decision about whether to apply for a review of marking or moderation. This change could have affected the numbers of reviews of marking or moderation from summer 2022 onwards.

Changes to the student population

Total numbers of qualification entries fluctuate with changes in the student population, which may affect the number of reviews of marking and moderation. There was an estimated 5.2% increase in the 16-year-old population from 671,075 in 2023 [according to ONS population estimates in 2022](#) to 706,006 in 2024 [according to ONS population estimates in 2023](#). There was an estimated 2.1% increase in the 18-year-old population from 655,951 in 2023 [according to ONS population estimates in 2022](#) to 669,743 in 2024 [according to ONS population estimates in 2023](#).

Data source

Data used in this release was submitted to Ofqual by AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC. Data for AS and A levels is presented jointly, unless otherwise specified. Data on the total number of GCSE, AS and A level component entries and qualification certifications presented in Table 1 and Table 2 of the data tables accompanying this release is collected for every exam series from exam boards in a separate data return. Data on the number of qualification certificates awarded in each subject presented in Table 7 and 8 was supplied by JCQ and is published in the JCQ results day reports for GCSE, AS and A level.

Limitations

Reviews are conducted on individual components and so it is possible to request more than one review for a single qualification that a student has taken. It is therefore possible that, where more than one review has been requested for the same student and qualification, more than one service may have been requested.

For example, a student who has taken GCSE biology and whose school has decided to request a review for 2 components that the student has taken for this qualification. The school may decide to submit both components for a review of marking or they may decide to submit one component for an administrative error review and one component for a review of marking. Breaking down the number of grades challenged and changed by service becomes problematic when multiple review services are requested for the same student across multiple components within a qualification.

In the example given above, only one grade is challenged but 2 review services are requested. Counting the grade challenged in both administrative error review and review of marking figures would mean double counting, which would be misleading. Therefore, in the breakdown of reviews requested and grades challenged and changed by service, students who have had their grades challenged through more than one service have not been included in the grades challenged and changed figures. These students are however included in all other figures reported and Tables 5 and 6 in the data tables published along with the report include a breakdown of the number of grades challenged and changed through multiple services by exam board.

When a review of moderation is requested by a school or college, the exam boards

provide Ofqual with data for all the students in the school or college who took the component, regardless of the outcome of the review.

Ofqual cannot guarantee that the data collected is correct, although it expects exam boards to send correct data. There are several validation and data check processes in place. Summary data is sent to exam boards for checking and confirmation. The figures reported in this release reflect the status of reviews at the data cut-off date: 12 November 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

To ensure confidentiality, the accompanying data in this report has been rounded in line with Ofqual's rounding policy.

Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5. If the value is below 5, it is represented as 'fewer than 5' and 0 represents zero reviews, grades challenged, or grades changed. Where individual rounded values have been presented in a table along with their sum total, the total may be slightly different to the sum of these individual rounded values because it has been calculated using the original unrounded values.

Percentages have been derived from unrounded values. Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place.

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. The 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

A number of other statistical releases and publications relate to this one:

- [Statistics: GCSEs (key stage 4) collection]()
- [Statistics: 16 to 19 attainment collection]()

For any related publications for qualifications offered in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland please contact the respective regulators – [Qualifications Wales](), [CCEA]() and the [Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)]().

Useful links

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

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