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Official Statistics

# Background information for appeals for GCSE, AS, A level and Project qualifications: 2023 to 2024 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 2023 to 2024 academic year. The report covers all the opportunities to enter for the qualifications during the academic year: November 2023 and June 2024 for GCSE qualifications; June 2024 for AS and A level qualifications; and November 2023, January 2024 and June 2024 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)

Three additional awarding organisations offer Project qualifications in England, but no appeals were reported for their qualifications in the academic year 2023 to 2024:

- ASDAN
- City & Guilds
- University of the Arts London (UAL)

## Description

### Submitting an appeal

For all GCSE, AS, A level, and Project qualifications schools and colleges can submit appeals to the awarding organisation if they are dissatisfied with the result of a review of marking, review of moderation, a malpractice decision, or the outcome of a reasonable adjustment or special consideration request. An appeal can cover multiple students who have been affected by the same issue.

Schools and colleges can submit appeals against the outcomes of reviews of marking and reviews of moderation, if they believe that a marking or moderation (or a review of marking/moderation) error has occurred or that the awarding organisation did not apply its review of marking or review of moderation procedures consistently, properly or fairly.

Schools and colleges can submit appeals regarding an awarding organisation's decisions about malpractice if they believe the awarding organisation did not follow its procedures, the decision was unreasonable given existing evidence, the sanction was disproportionate or if new evidence has come to light.

Schools and colleges can also submit appeals related to reasonable adjustments and special consideration if they believe the awarding organisation did not follow its procedures.

The [GCSE Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements](#) and [AS and A level Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements](#) also require awarding organisations to accept appeals requests directly from private candidates.

### The appeals process

The [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\) guide](#) to the awarding bodies' appeals process describes 2 steps for appeals:

1. Preliminary appeal ('stage 1' appeal): a review by a senior awarding organisation member who has not previously been involved with the particular case.
2. Appeal hearing ('stage 2' appeal): applicants and awarding bodies present their respective cases to the panel of 3 or more members, one of which must be independent of 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, or private candidate can request an appeal hearing only after going through a preliminary appeal.

Ofqual's Conditions do not prescribe timescales for appeals. The [Joint Council for Qualifications guidelines](#) set out target timescales for completing appeals. The target timescales in the 2023 to 2024 academic year allowed 6 weeks (42 calendar days) to complete a preliminary appeal from the receipt of the application, and 10 weeks (70 calendar days, in addition to time already spent at the preliminary appeal stage) to complete an appeal hearing from the receipt of a request for an appeal hearing. 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.

# Context

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to the cancellation of exams in [summer 2020](#) and [summer 2021](#). 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 different appeals process in place in academic years 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021, these years are not included in this report.

This report presents comparisons with data between the 2021 to 2022, 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 academic years. [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. Please note that whilst the same appeals process was in place between these years, comparisons should be treated with caution due to the differences in the [grading standard applied in summer 2022 as well as the additional autumn 2021 exam series](#).

## 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.

From the June 2023 exam series onwards, data on the total number of grades

awarded for GCSE, AS, and A level was collected by Ofqual from awarding organisations and contains information on grades awarded to students in England. Prior to the June 2023 exam series this data was provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), on behalf of the regulated awarding organisations offering GCSE, AS, and A level. GCSE data covers full course and short course.

For GCSE, AS, and A level, the number of grades awarded reported here includes unclassified, or not awarded results (for example if a student was absent). These results are included, because they can be appealed and if appealed are counted as a grade challenged in this report.

For Project qualifications, data on the number of certificates issued is sent quarterly by awarding organisations to Ofqual. The number of certificates issued for Project qualifications only includes students who were awarded a certificating grade, and does not include unclassified or not awarded results.

## **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 2024 series reflect the status of appeals at the data cut-off date of 17 February 2025. Appeals reported for the November 2023 GCSE and Project series and the January 2024 Project series reflect the status of appeals at the data cut-off date of 23 July 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 values. 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. 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](mailto: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](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk) or via the OSR website.

## Related publications

Related statistical releases and publications:

- [Malpractice for GCSE and A level](#): 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](#) this statistical release published by Ofqual reports on the number of reviews of marking and moderation for GCSE, AS and A level
- [Special consideration in GCSE, AS and A level](#) 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](#) 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

You can find additional information related to this release in the:

- [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

Head of profession: Ben Cuff

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