

8 August 2016

Ms J Reddy

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Our Ref: F/568  
Your Ref

Dear Ms Reddy

## Request for Information

I refer to your recent request for information received by Ofqual on 9 July 2016 and made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act). You requested the following information:-

*Please let me know for the last 2 years:*

*How many complaints Ofqual received about:*

1. GCSE, AS, A level and Diploma Principal Learning and Projects
2. National Assessments
3. Other Qualifications?

*Please provided statistics in relation to these complaints by type and outcome.*

*I am a little confused by the reference in your last annual report to "77,400 qualification grades being changed". Of these grade changes approx. how many related to cases referred to Ofqual?*

*On how many occasions did Ofqual require or recommend that:*

- (a) an exam board reconsider grades under 1. above,
- (b) an awarding body reconsider grades under 2. above; and
- (c) the STA reconsider grades under 3. above?

*Approx. what percentage of requirements/recommendations to reconsider resulted in a change?*

Under the Act, public authorities have two duties to individuals requiring information: firstly to confirm whether or not they hold the information requested, and secondly to provide a copy of that information unless one of the exemptions under the Act applies.

I confirm that Ofqual holds information of the type you have requested.

In relation to the first part of your request figures for complaints and the outcomes of each over the last two years are set out below:-

**1. GCSE, AS, A level and Diploma Principal Learning and Projects – 111 complaints received**

Upheld - 1  
Partially upheld - 8  
Not upheld - 91  
Not within Ofqual's remit - 11

**2. National Assessments – 0 complaints received**

**3. Other Qualifications – 60 complaints received**

Upheld - 5  
Partially upheld - 1  
Not upheld - 47  
Not within Ofqual's remit - 6

The second part of your request concerns grade changes. The figures you quote in your request relate to the number of grade changes resulting from the Enquiries about Results (EaR) process for the summer 2014 series of exams. Since that report was published the 2014 figure has been adjusted to 77,900. You can see the updated report at

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/512899/2016-03-31-enquiries-about-results-summer-2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/512899/2016-03-31-enquiries-about-results-summer-2015.pdf) . The report relates to GCSE and A level qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, other UK regions and overseas, during the summer 2015 exam series.

The 2015 statistical report

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508222/appeals-for-gcse-and-a-level-summer-2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508222/appeals-for-gcse-and-a-level-summer-2015.pdf) includes an explanation of the post results process, which includes the EaR process, at pages 13 and 14; the explanation is also included with this response. You will see that Ofqual is only involved in the process at the Examination Procedures Review Service (EPRS) stage.

The EPRS is provided by Ofqual who will review each application and, if appropriate, arrange a review hearing. The process will look at whether the exam board has followed the appropriate procedures and used them properly and fairly. Ofqual will only look at whether or not the rules about the exam, how it was marked and how the qualification was graded, have been properly followed; it does not look at the grade awarded.

In your request you have asked on how many occasions did Ofqual require or recommend that grades are reconsidered. As explained above the EPRS does not look at the grade awarded but the procedures for awarding. Ofqual cannot require or recommend an exam board to reconsider grades only that the procedure for awarding that grade is reviewed. The EPRS only looks at cases in relation to GCSE, AS, A level and Diploma qualifications.

If you are unhappy with the way in which your request has been handled you have the right to request an internal review. You can request an internal review by contacting:-

Alison Townsend  
Board Secretary  
Ofqual  
Spring Place  
Coventry Business Park  
Herald Avenue  
Coventry, CV5 6UB  
(alison.townsend@ofqual.gov.uk)

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review, you can apply to the Information Commissioner. Complaints to the Information Commissioner should be sent to:-

FOI/EIR Complaints Resolution  
Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A Townsend', written in a cursive style.

**Alison Townsend**  
Board Secretary

## Background notes

In this release, Ofqual presents data on the number of appeals made against grades given for GCSEs and A levels, the number of certificates issued for these qualifications and the number of entries. The data covers England, Wales, Northern Ireland, other UK regions and overseas. In this release, AS figures are included in the figures reported for A level since AS units can be a subset of the A level qualification.

## The post-results process

### Enquiries about results

Every year, the GCSE and A level exam boards publish information and guidance for schools and colleges on the post-results services following exams and 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, it can ask the exam board to investigate the marking. This is known as an enquiry about result.

### Appeals

If a school or college has gone through the enquiries about results process and is dissatisfied with the outcome, it can make an appeal to the exam board. An appeal can be in relation to the grades of one or more candidates, if they are all thought to be affected by the same issue. Appeals are usually made about the results of assessments or in regard to the exam boards' processes when a centre is not satisfied with the outcome of an Enquiry about a Result. Appeals can also be made in relation to an exam board's decisions made about malpractice, or in regard to access arrangements and special consideration.

A school or college can make an appeal within two calendar weeks of receiving the outcome of the enquiry about a result.

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

- Stage 1 is a review of the case by a senior member of the exam board who has not been involved previously with the particular case.
- Stage 2 is a presentation of the case to an appeals panel. The exam board convenes the panel. It will comprise at least three members, one of whom must be independent (that means someone who is not, and has not at any time during the 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 take the appeal to stage 2 only after going through stage 1.

Both stages should usually be completed within 50 working days of the appeal being lodged with the exam board. In some cases, appeals are not resolved until after 50 days from the initial receipt of the appeal. Sometimes, this occurs to allow a fair appeal hearing with appropriate evidence, and 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 within three weeks of receiving the outcome from the exam board. The Examination Procedures Review Service is provided by Ofqual. Ofqual will review each application and arrange a review hearing if appropriate. Ofqual will look at whether the exam board has followed the appropriate procedures and used them properly and fairly. Ofqual will only look at whether or not the rules about the exam, how it was marked and how the qualification was graded, have been properly followed. Where there is a strong case and Ofqual is not confident that the published results are appropriate, the exam board will be asked to reconsider the case or make other recommendations. An observer may be appointed to monitor the reconsideration of a case. Otherwise, the original decision of the exam board will be upheld. Where appropriate, Ofqual can offer wider recommendations to exam boards or other regulatory authorities.

You can find further details of the Examination Procedures Review Service on Ofqual's website.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> [www.gov.uk/appeal-exam-results-for-schools-colleges-and-private-candidates](http://www.gov.uk/appeal-exam-results-for-schools-colleges-and-private-candidates)