

[REDACTED]

From: Jeremy Benson <Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>
Sent: 25 August 2012 11:13
To: MILLAND, Gabriel; PAIGE, Anna; Fiona Pethick; [REDACTED] (Ofqual Official)
Cc: FREEDMAN, Sam; [REDACTED] BEGOL, Hardip; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Dennis Opposs (OfE Official)
Subject: Re: Guardian online: GCSE results: headteacher attacks Michael Gove over marking 'butchery'

Just about to meet to take stock. Will let you know after that. - Response attached.

Jeremy

Jeremy Benson, Deputy Director - Policy, Ofqual
Office: [REDACTED] Mobile: [REDACTED]

From: Gabriel.MILLAND@education.gsi.gov.uk [mailto:Gabriel.MILLAND@education.gsi.gov.uk]
Sent: Saturday, August 25, 2012 10:59 AM
To: Jeremy Benson; Anna.PAIGE@education.gsi.gov.uk <Anna.PAIGE@education.gsi.gov.uk>; Fiona Pethick; [REDACTED] (Ofqual Official)
Cc: Sam.FREEDMAN@education.gsi.gov.uk <Sam.FREEDMAN@education.gsi.gov.uk>; [REDACTED] (OfE Official)
[REDACTED]
Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk <Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Dennis Opposs
Subject: Re: Guardian online: GCSE results: headteacher attacks Michael Gove over marking 'butchery'

Jeremy - do we know when that might be released?

Gabriel

From: Jeremy Benson [mailto:Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk]
Sent: Saturday, August 25, 2012 10:33 AM
To: PAIGE, Anna; Fiona Pethick <Fiona.Pethick@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; [REDACTED]
Cc: FREEDMAN, Sam; [REDACTED] BEGOL, Hardip; [REDACTED] MILLAND, Gabriel;
Dennis Opposs <Dennis.Opposs@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>
Subject: Re: Guardian online: GCSE results: headteacher attacks Michael Gove over marking 'butchery'

We're developing a response to the NAHT letter at the moment, which will set out our position clearly.

Jeremy

Jeremy Benson, Deputy Director - Policy, Ofqual
Office: [REDACTED], Mobile: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Anna.PAIGE@education.gsi.gov.uk [mailto:Anna.PAIGE@education.gsi.gov.uk]
Sent: Saturday, August 25, 2012 10:08 AM
To: Jeremy Benson; Fiona Pethick; [REDACTED]
Cc: Sam.FREEDMAN@education.gsi.gov.uk <Sam.FREEDMAN@education.gsi.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk <Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Gabriel.MILLAND@education.gsi.gov.uk
<Gabriel.MILLAND@education.gsi.gov.uk>; Dennis Opposs

Thanks.

Could you let us have an update on what you're planning to put out on all this?

Anna

From: Jeremy Benson [mailto:Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk]
Sent: Saturday, August 25, 2012 12:00 AM
To: PAIGE, Anna; Fiona Pethick <Fiona.Pethick@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; [REDACTED]
Cc: FREEDMAN, Sam; [REDACTED] BEGOL, Hardip; [REDACTED] MILLAND, Gabriel
Subject: RE: Guardian online: GCSE results: headteacher attacks Michael Gove over marking 'butchery'

Anna

Thanks. John has been in touch with Glenys directly so she'll consider her response to that.

Jeremy

Jeremy Benson
Deputy Director, Policy, Ofqual

- Direct: [REDACTED] • Office: 0300 303 3344 • Mobile: [REDACTED]
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From: Anna.PAIGE@education.gsi.gov.uk [mailto:Anna.PAIGE@education.gsi.gov.uk]
Sent: 24 August 2012 18:37
To: Fiona Pethick; [REDACTED] Jeremy Benson
Cc: Sam.FREEDMAN@education.gsi.gov.uk; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk; [REDACTED]
Gabriel.MILLAND@education.gsi.gov.uk
Subject: FW: Guardian online: GCSE results: headteacher attacks Michael Gove over marking 'butchery'

Jeremy – in the meeting you were in earlier we talked about John Townsley's reaction and mentioned that a call to him could be a good idea. You may already have his contact details, but if not, his mobile number is [REDACTED]

Again, would be helpful if any of you do manage to speak to him if you could give us a quick read-out.

Thanks – and sorry to be bombarding you.

Anna

Anna Paige
Deputy Director, Qualifications Systems and Reform Division

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, August 24, 2012 06:24 PM

To: [REDACTED];
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(OTE officials)
Subject: Guardian online: GCSE results: headteacher attacks Michael Gove over marking 'butchery'

John Townley, head of two academy schools in Leeds, says academies and other schools are united in condemnation of the butchery of marking down GCSE English. He is considering supporting plans for legal action against Ofqual that is being drawn up by local authorities

GCSE results: headteacher attacks Michael Gove over marking 'butchery'

One of education secretary's favourite headteachers says schools are united in condemnation of marking down GCSEs



Michael Gove fails to fully understand the 'butchery' of the marking down of GCSE English students, according to headteacher John Townsley. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images

One of Michael Gove's favourite headteachers has rounded on the education secretary, claiming he has failed to understand the "butchery" of the marking down of GCSE English students this week in an attempt to counter grade-inflation.

John Townsley, the head of two academy schools in Leeds, who has been singled out for praise by Gove for turning round failing schools, said that academies and other schools affected are now united around the issue and considering supporting plans for legal action against the exam regulator Ofqual that is being drawn up by local authorities.

John Townley, head of two academy schools in Leeds, says academies and other schools are united in condemnation of the butchery of marking down GCSE English. He is considering supporting plans for legal action against Ofqual that is being drawn up by local authorities.

His comments come amid a growing backlash against Thursday's GCSE results, which saw students who would have received a C grade for English if they had submitted their papers in January awarded a D grade for the same marks gained this summer. Townsley said that he and

other heads were "incredibly angry on behalf of the children" who unexpectedly dropped a grade, in some cases putting their place at college in jeopardy.

Local authorities are indicating that a case could be brought on the allegation that the mark-down breached laws on equal opportunities. Headteachers said emerging evidence suggested the downgrades had hit pupils from poor backgrounds and ethnic minorities hardest.

The intervention from Townley, who until March was also a board member of Ofqual and chairs the Specialist School and Academy Trust – which has a membership of more than 5,000 schools – will be an embarrassment for Gove, who has spoken out against grade inflation but this week denied placing any political pressure on exam boards such as AQA, or Ofqual, to raise the bar on this summer's exams.

"Headteachers are totally supportive of the idea that there shouldn't be guaranteed year-on-year rises in results and we accepted the need for sophisticated change," Townsley said. "But what has taken place in the AQA has been butchery. I do not believe the secretary of state or the Department for Education fully understands the extent to which AQA's performance has been totally unreliable."

Brian Lightman, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said his organisation was gathering more evidence on exactly who had been affected. "If we are advised that legal action is the right way to challenge this, then that is what we will do," he said.

Judith Blake, the deputy leader of Leeds city council, said: "We are working with all of the other local authorities which are similarly affected to see what the best way of mounting a challenge is. If it takes a legal challenge, we will look at what grounds we have. In the first place we will be looking at how AQA has responded to any directives from the department of education about the grade level. The way the AQA has dealt with this has seriously disadvantaged the life chances in Leeds of a minimum of 600 people [who were predicted at least a C in English and received a D]."

Townsley said: "There would be a united front across academies and schools with regards to that action. It would be against the awarding bodies and Ofqual because it is a question of equal opportunity for all young people."

Stephen Twigg, the shadow education minister, wrote to the chairman of the Commons education select committee chairman Graham Stuart on Friday, to demand a parliamentary inquiry "to restore confidence in the exam system".

He wrote: "Parents, pupils and teachers have a right to understand what has happened. However, ministers cannot hide behind exam boards or Ofqual. Michael Gove has said this is nothing to do with him and that 'inevitably there will be changes'. That is not good enough."

Gove also faced pressure from the right. Senior Conservative John Redwood, the shadow secretary of state for the environment, wrote on his blog: "It is unfair on those taking the exams if they do not know what is expected, or if the standards change between the time they start and the time they finish without them knowing it."

"It is particularly unfair if someone needs a C or higher in a GCSE to go on to further study, and has just failed to get this through some unannounced change in the standard required."

The Association of School and College Leaders called for an investigation into the changes to the grade boundaries and several schools said they would directly challenge the English results.

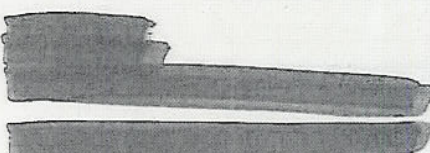
Stephanie Framcom, assistant principal of St Aidan's Church of England Academy in Darlington said: "Last year, 44% of our students achieved five A to C GCSE passes, including English and maths, but this year we are looking at a pass rate of 34%, which is not acceptable and is being strongly contested."

Steve Allen, the principal of De Ferrers Academy in Horninglow, Staffordshire, said: "Our students and teachers work incredibly hard and take pride in their GCSE results ... We will be appealing against the GCSE English results and asking for a full re-mark and justification."

In a statement Ofqual said: "Grade boundaries can change from exam series to exam series. Decisions on grade boundaries are made after the assessments have been taken, based on all the available evidence. In the summer, more information was available about performance across the qualification than in January. Exam boards considered this and made decisions accordingly, to make sure that the final qualification grades were comparable with last year's."

Another London local authority said 150 students were directly affected. The Association of Directors of Children's Services said its members are planning to negotiate with colleges on behalf of students who received D in English and so missed out on further education places.

A spokeswoman for AQA confirmed it has been contacted by schools complaining about the results but repeated denials that the organisation was under any political pressure to alter the grading system.

 (DfE Official)

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From: Adrian Long <Adrian.Long@ofqual.gov.uk>
Sent: 25 August 2012 15:07
To: BEGOL, Hardip; PAIGE, Anna; Jeremy Benson
Subject: OFQUAL STATEMENT
Attachments: Letter to Russell Hobby NAHT.pdf

Please find below the statement published by Ofqual this afternoon. This is on our website alongside the attached letter.

OFQUAL TO LOOK CLOSELY AT GCSE ENGLISH CONCERNS

Examinations and qualifications regulator Ofqual said today that it will look closely at concerns over GCSE English results.

In a letter to the National Association of Head Teachers Ofqual Chief Regulator, Glenys Stacey, says there are "questions about how grade boundaries were set in a very small number of units across the year" which have caused concern.

She said that Ofqual will look closely over the coming days at the detail of grade C boundary setting for some of this very small number of units.

She added:

"We recognise the continuing concerns among students, parents and teachers about this years GCSE English results. We will look closely at how the results were arrived at. We will do this quickly, but thoroughly, so that we ensure confidence is maintained in our examinations system."

Ms Stacey said she expected to gather evidence over the next week and that Ofqual would then meet awarding bodies to discuss its findings.

Note to editors

1. This statement and the accompanying letter has been published this afternoon on our website:
<http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/news-and-announcements/130-news-and-announcements-press-releases/969-ofqual-to-look-closely-at-gcse-concerns>
2. For any queries, please call our out of hours press number on 07798 924552

Both documents are being sent to the media. DfE press office and Henry de Z have received them

Adrian

Adrian Long
Director of Policy and Engagement, Ofqual

- Office: [REDACTED] • Mobile: [REDACTED]
- 1410 Spring Place, Herald Avenue, Coventry Business Park • Coventry • West Midlands • CV5 6UB

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From: Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk [mailto:Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk]
Sent: 25 August 2012 14:50
To: Anna.PAIGE@education.gsi.gov.uk; Jeremy Benson
Cc: Adrian Long
Subject: Re: GCSEs

Copy me in as well - I will have blackberry on

From: PAIGE, Anna
Sent: Saturday, August 25, 2012 02:19 PM
To: 'Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk' <Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>; BEGOL, Hardip
Cc: 'Adrian.Long@ofqual.gov.uk' <Adrian.Long@ofqual.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: GCSEs

I can keep an eye on emails from here until Tuesday if need be. If you need to speak to me best to call my mobile

✱ [REDACTED] Will be driving until about 5 your time though.

Anna

Anna

From: Jeremy Benson [mailto:Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk]
Sent: Saturday, August 25, 2012 01:14 PM
To: PAIGE, Anna; BEGOL, Hardip
Cc: Adrian Long <Adrian.Long@ofqual.gov.uk>
Subject: GCSEs

Both

Adrian has just spoken Henry de Z. We now think that there may be an issue with an AQA exam - not controlled assessment - and we have concluded that we need to have a look at that (this is the one where there was a big change in the boundary, referred to in Sam's email on his conversation with Nick Weller). Current plan is a letter to Graham Stuart this pm announcing we'll be having a look at the grading here.

Who on the policy side should we be keeping in touch with?

Jeremy

Jeremy Benson
Deputy Director, Policy, Ofqual

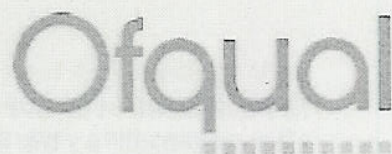
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Glenys Stacey
Chief Regulator



25 August 2012

Mr Russell Hobby
General Secretary
NAHT
1 Heath Square
Boltro Road
Haywards Heath
RH16 1BL

Office of Qualifications
and Examinations Regulation
Spring Place
Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UB

Telephone 0300 303 3344
Textphone 0300 303 3345
info@ofqual.gov.uk
www.ofqual.gov.uk

By Email: Russell.hobby@naht.org.uk

Dear Russell

Thank you for your letter of 24 August.

We appreciate the concerns being expressed by you and others about GCSE English this year, and we are grateful to you and others for raising them so promptly.

We are acting on these concerns, and looking closely over the coming days at the detail of grade C boundary setting for some units in English GCSEs. We will be in touch again as soon as we have made progress.

By way of background, we use what is known as the comparable outcomes approach to maintaining standards. It uses the principle that a student should get the same grade for a qualification as they would have done the previous year, even where there are changes to the qualifications (this is explained in more detail on our website at <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-05-09-maintaining-standards-in-summer-2012.pdf>).

In December 2010, the Ofqual Board gave extensive consideration to using comparable outcomes for the new GCSEs to be awarded in 2011 and 2012 – the paper they discussed is published on our website. The approach had already been used for A level awards the previous summer, and we started using for AS levels the summer before that. Some people have suggested that the decision to move to a comparable outcomes approach was a rushed decision, or a politically motivated one. You can see that this was not the case. In implementing the approach, we have worked closely with our fellow regulators in Wales and Northern Ireland.

It is always a challenge to secure comparable outcomes in modular, graded qualifications. The comparable outcomes approach uses a balance of examiner judgement and data about the prior attainment of the candidates to determine how standards should be set, so that they are comparable from

year to year. The key difficulty posed by modular qualifications is that when the qualification awards come to be made, some modules have already been awarded, so the scope for adjusting grade boundaries so that standards are set correctly is reduced.

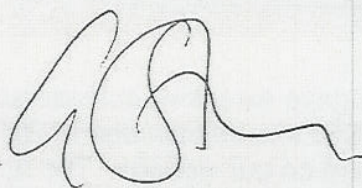
Modular GCSE English presented particular difficulties this summer, we know. It is a high-profile, large-entry, and of course a very important qualification. This year, there were significant changes, including the introduction of an English GCSE alongside new English Language and English Literature GCSEs. There was also an increase in the numbers of students taking other qualifications such as iGCSEs, and there were changes in entry patterns, which all means that the cohorts were not comparable from year to year. Setting standards when things change in this way is not always trouble free.

I agree with you that we should seek to avoid situations like this in the future. As I have explained, though, there is always a risk of these difficulties with a modular system. As you will know, we will be moving away from modular GCSEs after the forthcoming school year. In future, the exam boards will only be making grading decisions in the summer, and will be able to look across the range of assessments as they do so. For the coming year, we will consider carefully whether there are particular lessons we can learn from this year's experience.

I would be happy to meet to discuss your concerns in more detail. I note that you have published your parallel letter to the Secretary of State on your website. I intend similarly to publish this response on the Ofqual website.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State as well as to the qualifications regulators in Wales and Northern Ireland. I am writing in similar terms to Graham Stuart MP, the Chair of the Education Select Committee, and I will be putting that letter on the Ofqual website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Glenys Stacey', written in a cursive style.

Glenys Stacey
Chief Regulator

[REDACTED]

From: Jeremy Benson <Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>
Sent: 25 August 2012 16:47
To: PAIGE, Anna; BEGOL, Hardip
Subject: Fw: First PA copy

Jeremy Benson, Deputy Director - Policy, Ofqual
Office: [REDACTED], Mobile: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] (Ofqual official)
Sent: Saturday, August 25, 2012 03:55 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: First PA copy

Topic EDUCATION

Published 25 Aug 2012 - 15:46

By James Tapsfield, Press Association Political Correspondent

Page 1: 15:46

The exams regulator is to look again at GCSE gradings amid claims that thousands of students have been treated unfairly.

Ofqual admitted there were "questions about how grade boundaries were set in a very small number of units across the year".

The move comes amid threats of legal action from local authorities and teachers.

It was revealed this week that the proportion of GCSEs - taken by pupils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland - awarded an A*-C grade had fallen for the first time in 24 years.

In a letter to the National Association of Head Teachers, Ofqual chief regulator Glenys Stacey wrote: "We recognise the continuing concerns among students, parents and teachers about this year's GCSE English results.

"We will look closely at how the results were arrived at.

"We will do this quickly, but thoroughly, so that we ensure confidence is maintained in our examinations system."

Ms Stacey said she expected to gather evidence over the next week and that Ofqual would then meet awarding bodies to discuss its findings.

mfl

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