

FURTHER GUIDANCE ON APPEALS (2021)

This information is based on the JCQ guide to appeals processes summer 2021 series

Q1 WHAT ARE THE DEADLINES FOR APPEALS?

The **time frame** for appeals:

Priority appeals (where a student's next steps are reliant on this grade, e.g. entrance to university)

10 August to 7 September: priority appeals window

- 10 August to 16 August: student requests centre review
- 10 August to 20 August: centre conducts centre review
- 11 August to 23 August: centre submits appeal to exam board

Standard appeals (where a student's next steps are not reliant on this grade)

10 August to end October: majority of non-priority appeals take place

- 10 August to 3 September: student requests centre review
- 10 August to 10 September: centre conducts centre review
- 11 August to 17 September: centre submits appeal to exam board

Q2 WHAT EVIDENCE HAS BEEN USED TO DETERMINE TEACHER ASSESSED GRADES (TAGs)?

Evidence that has been considered in determining a teacher assessed grade (TAG):

You have previously been made aware of the basket of evidence that we have used to determine TAGs. When using this evidence we have considered the weight and validity of each piece, the circumstances under which it was completed and made a holistic academic judgment to arrive at a grade.

You were also asked to share with us any relevant individual information or circumstances that you wanted us to consider when determining the TAG. We were required to consider whether the issue or event had, or was likely to have had, a material effect on a student's ability to demonstrate their normal level of attainment in an assessment and have done so. Special consideration could not be applied due to lost teaching and learning, instead, this was addressed through the flexibility of the range of evidence we used to determine students' grades.

We would like to reassure you that we have undertaken a rigorous quality assurance process as set out in our [centre policy](#) which you will find on the website. This policy has been approved by an awarding organisation as part of the external quality assurance process.

Q3 WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING WHETHER TO APPEAL?

In order to decide whether to request a review, you will need to consider:

- the allowable grounds for appeal
- our [centre policy](#)
- the sources of evidence we used to determine the grade, along with the marks/grades associated with them (the basket of evidence on the portal)
- the details of any special circumstances and factors that may have resulted in disruption to what that student was taught, that you shared with us and that will have been considered in determining the grade, e.g. access arrangements/reasonable adjustments or mitigating circumstances such as illness.

It is important to note that following an appeal a grade can stay the same, go up or go down and the appeal grade, which is determined by the exam board and not the college, will be the final grade. For example, if the TAG is a B and you choose to appeal because you think it could be an A, the final grade could be an A, a B or it could go down to a C. This could impact an offer from a university - you may be able to secure a place at a more preferable university however if your grade goes down you may find you no longer have a place at your current university and may need to consider an alternative.

Q4 WHAT ARE THE STAGES AND GROUNDS FOR APPEAL?

Stage 1 - appeals to the college (centre review)

a] Administrative error by the college: centre made an administrative error, e.g. an incorrect grade was submitted; an incorrect assessment mark was used when determining the grade.

b] Procedural error by the college: centre did not apply a procedure correctly, such as the centre did not follow its centre policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or special consideration. The centre policy can be found on our website [here](#).

Stage 2 - appeal to the exam board(s) (this must be made via the college)

c] Administrative error by the exam board: the awarding organisation made an administrative error, e.g. the grade was incorrectly changed by the awarding organisation during the processing of grades.

d] Unreasonable academic judgement by the college: student considers that the centre made an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement in the choice of evidence from which to determine the grade and/or the determination of the grade from that evidence.

Q5 HOW DO I APPEAL?

Using the JCQ Appeals Request Form on the Blackpool Sixth website (Exams page).

Q6 WHAT IS THE APPEAL PROCESS?

Stage 1 - centre review

We will review whether we:

- made an administrative error, e.g. we submitted an incorrect grade; we used an incorrect assessment mark when determining your grade.
- did not apply a procedure correctly, e.g. we did not follow our Centre Policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or mitigating circumstances, such as illness.

Q7 WHAT IF, AFTER THIS CENTRE REVIEW, I STILL DON'T AGREE WITH THE GRADE?

If, after our centre review, you still don't think you have the correct grade you can ask the college to appeal to the awarding organisation (exam board) on your behalf and they will consider whether the college followed the procedure correctly, if the board made an administrative error or whether we have made an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement.

Q8 CAN I JUST SEND AN APPEAL STRAIGHT TO THE EXAM BOARD WITHOUT GOING THROUGH A CENTRE REVIEW FIRST?

Please note that appeals cannot be made to an exam board until the centre review has been completed and they will not accept appeals directly from students or parents. Appeals submitted by students or parents directly to an exam board will not be processed and will need to be re-submitted by us.

This may risk appeals not being completed in time for those students applying to higher education who did not attain their firm choice (i.e. the offer they accepted as their first choice) and wish to appeal an A level or other Level 3 qualification result.

Q9 WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT STAGE 2 - WHAT WILL THE EXAM BOARD DO WHEN I APPEAL?

Stage 2 - appeal to the exam board

The exam board will review whether

- the college made an **unreasonable** exercise of academic judgement¹ in the choice of evidence from which they determined your grade and/or in the determination of your grade from that evidence.
- the college did not apply a procedure correctly, e.g. we did not follow our Centre Policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or mitigating circumstances, such as illness.
- the exam board made an administrative error, e.g. they changed your grade during the processing of grades.

¹ A reasonable judgement is one that is supported by evidence.

Q10 WHAT IS AN UNREASONABLE JUDGEMENT?

An exercise of judgement will not be unreasonable simply because a student considers that an alternative grade should have been awarded, even if the student puts forward supporting evidence. There may be a difference of opinion without there being an unreasonable exercise of judgement. The reviewer will not remark individual assessments to make fine judgements but will take a holistic approach based on the overall evidence. The reviewer will only conclude that there has been an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement if the TAG was clearly wrong – i.e. there was no basis upon which the grade could properly have been given.

Q11 WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN THE EXAM BOARD RECEIVES MY APPEAL?

When an application for an appeal is received, the exam board will decide whether it will be accepted for evaluation or not. The decision whether to accept the application for an appeal is based on:

- a. whether the grounds of appeal are within the remit of the appeals process (where a rationale is required)
- b. whether a centre review has been completed
- c. the timing of the application in relation to the published deadlines for submitting appeals
- d. whether the student has confirmed that they consent to their grade being raised, lowered or staying the same.

If an application for an appeal is not accepted, the reason(s) for this will be given.

Q12 WHAT IF I DECIDE TO WITHDRAW MY APPEAL AFTER HAVING SUBMITTED IT?

Please note that following a submission of a request for a review you may subsequently choose to withdraw it, however this must happen before a finding has been made, otherwise you will not be able to do so.

Q13 WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE EXAM BOARD HAS CONSIDERED MY APPEAL?

Results of an appeal to the exam board:

As a result of the appeal, the case will either be rejected (disallowed) or upheld (allowed) in whole or in part.

It is important to note that should an appeal be upheld (allowed) it will not necessarily result in a grade change for a student, for example, if the exam board find that a piece of information or evidence has not been taken into account they may also decide that not doing so has not had a material effect of the overall grade given and therefore won't change the grade.

What is discovered in the centre review following an appeal may also result in another student's grade requiring a change too.

Exam boards have the final say about grade changes, not the college.

Q14 WHAT IF I WANT TO APPEAL ON MORE THAN ONE GROUND?

We have been advised that where an appeal is submitted on more than one ground (e.g. the exam board is asked to review both procedures and the exercise of academic judgement), the appeal process is likely to take longer. This could be an important consideration for students who urgently need the outcome of their appeal.

Q15 WHAT IF I'M NOT HAPPY WITH THE EXAM BOARD DECISION?

Following the conclusion of the exam board's appeal process, a student who remains concerned that their grade was incorrect may be able to apply for a procedural review to the Exam Procedures Review Service (EPRS) from the relevant regulator. The regulators will provide further details about the EPRS processes for summer 2021 before results days this summer.

Q16 I WANT TO DISCUSS GRADES BEFORE RESULTS DAY?

Confidentiality of grades

Staff are not allowed to discuss or disclose the TAGs with students or their parents/carers prior to the results being published in August. It is important, therefore, that you do not ask a member of staff to reveal any grades or to submit higher grades. Heads of Centre have been asked to **keep records of such cases and might be required to report to the exam boards any cases where they believe inappropriate pressure is being put on teachers. Exam boards may treat such cases as potential malpractice.** Please be reassured that the process of grading involves a wide range of expert staff and leaders at the college and a robust quality assurance process. Thank you in advance for your support.

Q17 THIS IS A VERY ANXIOUS TIME, CAN YOU HELP?

We recognise this is an anxious time for students and we will do everything we can to support them on/after the results days. The pastoral team and Heads of Department will be available to provide information, advice and guidance on results day.

Q18 WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

This ['Guidance for students, parents and guardians: GCSEs and AS/A Levels in England Summer 2021'](#) will provide further clarification.

Our website is kept up-to-date with useful information and you can find further information about results arrangements and appeals on the Exams page within the Information section ([Exams](#))