

Dear parents, carers and students,

I hope that despite everything, that students are enjoying their Year 12 induction lessons and the start of their summer holidays.

As you are aware, Friday 18th June was the deadline for all Centre Assessment Grades to be submitted to the examination boards. We are now in the position to provide you with some further information about how grades are to be awarded this year and the appeals process:

A brief reminder about how grades were arrived at this year:

Internal Quality Assurance (QA)

We conducted an extensive internal QA process, with a thorough system of scrutiny and review to ensure the centre assessed grades we submitted were fair, evidence-based and determined consistently. This was a vital part of the grading process and has been ongoing since exams were cancelled by the government.

The stages are detailed below. The most important thing to know about this process is that in every subject, each student was focussed upon individually and their range of evidence and grades carefully considered in order to reach a centre assessed grade that is representative of their achievement.

Stage 1: Quality assurance of identified assessments

- QA began with training for teachers and subject leaders to ensure whole school clarity regarding Ofqual and exam board criteria for assessing students. This meant we could issue guidelines to ensure consistency within and across curriculum teams.
- Curriculum Leaders had to identify which key assessments would form the evidence base. School senior leaders - and subsequently the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) - checked this information to make sure it was appropriate and reflected the way a course is assessed normally.
- Assessments were checked to ensure that they were based on exam board questions and material; that they only assessed what students had been taught and that they covered a broad enough range of content to allow students of all abilities to demonstrate their skills. Maintaining breadth in assessments ensured that we could differentiate effectively. PPE's in November 2020; March 2021 and May 2021 were centrally devised to ensure all students/classes sitting the same assessment did so at the same time and under the same conditions, and that students who were entitled to access arrangements could access these.

Stage 2: Marking and moderation

- All teachers marked assessments using common mark schemes issued by their subject leader, marking guidance and grade descriptors (from the relevant exam board). Additionally, coursework was marked against specific exam board marks schemes.

- Moderation of marking across classes took place to ensure consistent application of the mark scheme.
- In some subjects, a sample of work (anonymised so that the student could not be identified) was marked by subject specialist teachers who do not teach at Sherburn High School (as well as being marked in school) as an extra layer of standardisation.

Stage 3: Grading individual assessments

- Once students' scores were all collected, subject leaders assigned provisional grade boundaries for each assessment using a similar method to that used by exam boards. They looked at historic grade boundaries; students' work alongside grade descriptors; and work of previous cohorts who had been graded externally in order to make sure boundaries accurately reflected the work. Exam boards would usually consider similar factors in reaching boundaries and it was important for us to adapt historic boundaries given assessments have been adapted.
- All subject leaders met with Mr Ralphs to explain the processes they were using to inform student CAGs, the breadth of assessment evidence being used and the moderation process to ensure consistency.

Stage 4: Assigning Centre Assessed Grades

The judgement about each grade had to be based on evidence of grades in identified assessments. Subject leaders considered the evidence from the identified assessments, for the whole subject cohort, in an objective and consistent way without risk of being unintentionally influenced by knowledge of individual students. Teachers considered the proposed grades derived at a subject level to identify any which appeared anomalous compared to previous grade patterns. Evidence for these identified students was further reviewed before arriving at a final grade.

Stage 5: Checking Centre Assessed Grades/Eliminating Administrative Error

- A final check and quality assurance of the proposed grades was carried out by one nominated member of the senior leadership team (to ensure consistency) to ensure they were not overly harsh or lenient compared to previous cohorts.
- Two colleagues in our exams team worked on entering grades on to the exam board portals; one entered the grades from the internal subject data tracking sheets whilst the other checked that they had been entered correctly

B. External Quality Assurance

Grades this summer were based on Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs). CAGs were submitted to the exam boards by us as a holistic assessment of students' performance in a subject, following a rigorous process of assessment, moderation and quality assurance.

These grades were then approved by the relevant exam board, following external quality assurance checks.

In some cases, the CAGs we submitted may have been reviewed by the exam board, who may have asked us to submit an alternative grade. However, any changes to the grades we submitted were done by professional teachers or reviewers; this year no grades have been changed as a result of an algorithm.

What do I do if I'm not happy with my / my child's grade?

All students have the opportunity to appeal their grade if they meet the eligibility criteria (see below). It is important to note that an appeal may result in a grade being lowered, staying the same, or going up. If a student puts in an appeal and their grade is lowered, they will receive the lower mark.

There is also the option to resit GCSEs, A levels and some AS levels in the autumn, which may be preferable to some students. The design, content and assessment of these papers will be the same as in a normal year.

What are the grounds for appeal?

There are five main grounds for appeal, as dictated by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). They are:

- You think we have made an **administrative error**: an example of this would be putting the wrong information into a spreadsheet.
- You think we have made a **procedural error**: this means we haven't properly followed our own process, as approved by the exam board. An example of this would be where you've been told you should have received extra time for assessments but this wasn't given in a certain subject.
- You think the **academic judgement on the selection of evidence was unreasonable**: you think the evidence used to grade you was not reasonable.
- You think the **academic judgement on the grade you were given was unreasonable**.

What does 'unreasonable' mean?

'Unreasonable' is a technical term in this context and means that no educational professional acting reasonably could have selected the same evidence or come up with the same grade.

This means that just because other forms of evidence may have been equally valid to use, the selection of evidence is not unreasonable. Because of the flexibility of the approach this year, every school and college will have used different forms of evidence.

It also means that the independent reviewers will **not** remark or grade students' evidence. Instead, they will look to see whether any teacher acting reasonably could have arrived at the same grade.

What will be the outcome of an appeal?

At either stage of the appeals process (see 'What are the two stages of an appeal?' below), a student's grade may go up, stay the same, or go down. When placing an appeal the student will

have to sign a declaration saying that they accept the fact their grade may go down and they may get a lower grade than their original Centre Assessed Grade.

What's a priority appeal?

Priority appeals will be handled more quickly than other appeals, where possible before UCAS's advisory deadline of 8 September.

Priority appeals are only open to **A level students starting university this autumn, who have missed out on the conditions of their firm or insurance offer.**

If you decided not to confirm a firm conditional offer and to go through clearing instead, JCQ cannot offer you a priority appeal.

JCQ cannot offer priority appeals for GCSE students, unfortunately.

When making a priority appeal, students will have to include their UCAS number so it can be confirmed that it is a genuine priority appeal.

What should I do if I don't get into my first choice of university?

First, don't panic. Speak to Mr Kirby about your options. You may wish to go through clearing, or, sit the autumn exams or summer exams next year to try to improve your grade.

If you are going to appeal your grade, you must let your university know you are appealing. They will then let you know whether they will hold a place for you pending the outcome of an appeal (note that universities are not obliged to hold a place for you; this is at their discretion).

What should I do before appealing?

Students must read the JCQ Student and Parent guide before appealing, which will be available on the JCQ website by results days.

Please consider that we may not be able to offer as much advice and guidance on the likely success of an appeal this summer as we would in normal years, as we have already moderated and quality assured all the grades ourselves.

What are the two stages of an appeal?

All appeals, on any of the grounds above, must first go through a **centre review**. At this stage, we will check for any administrative errors, and check that our policies and procedures were followed correctly. Our policy has already been approved by the exam boards, so we are only ensuring that we followed this properly.

The outcome of the centre review will be communicated to students when made.

At the centre review stage, if we find that a grade should go up or down, we will ask the exam board to change it. They will then consider this request.

Following the outcome of a centre review, students may still choose to pursue an **awarding organisation appeal**. They must fill in the form below, which we will then send on their behalf to the exam boards. Students and parents cannot send appeals directly to the exam board themselves – it must come from us.

The outcome of the awarding organisation appeal will be communicated to students when made.

How do I make an appeal?

Following results days, students should fill in the first section of the JCQ form [here](#) and send through to examappeals@shs.starmat.uk

What are the deadlines for priority appeals?

The suggested deadline for requesting a **priority appeal** is 16th August (students cannot appeal before results day on 10th August).

We will attempt to complete the centre review by 20th August*. If students wish to progress this to an awarding organisation appeal, they must send the completed form to us by 23rd August for priority appeals.

*At both stages of the appeals process, there may be the need for specialist, expert knowledge (e.g. subject teachers, SEND knowledge). This may not be possible in August. In such cases, we may have to wait until the start of term, but priority appeals will still be treated as a priority.

What are the deadlines for non-priority appeals?

Non-priority appeals are any A levels, GCSEs or vocational qualifications, where a firm or insurance university place is not pending.

The deadline for submitting a centre review is 3rd September; and the deadline for submitting an awarding organisation appeal is 10th September.

Appeals received after these dates may still be considered.

You know my / my child's grades. Why can't you tell us? What if you know we haven't met our university conditional offer?

We are forbidden from disclosing the Centre Assessed Grades to any third party, including students and parents, until results days. Any teacher or member of staff who does this is committing exam malpractice.

Although students may have been given marks or grades on single pieces of evidence, we cannot disclose the final submitted CAG.

During the external quality assurance process taking place in June or July, our submitted CAGs may be moved up or down (although this will always be done through human agency, not by an algorithm).

We only know what a student's conditional offer is if they have chosen to share that information with us. It has not formed part of our objective grading of students. Where we do know this information, we must not let students know their submitted CAGs, even if they haven't met the conditions of their offer.

Exams Results Days

10th August 2021: AS, A Level and Level 3 vocational grades

12th August 2021: GCSE and Level 2 vocational grades

Further details about Exam Results day will follow closer to the end of term.

We look forward to sharing our students' success with them in August,

Yours ...

John Ralphs & Miriam Oakley,