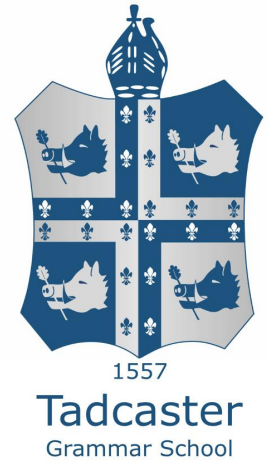


Be Your Best Self

Tuesday 22nd June 2021



Dear Year 11 & 13 Parents, Carers and Year 11 & 13 students,

Update on the Centre-Based Assessment process for summer 2021

Between January and April 2021 we contacted you on a number of occasions in order to outline the procedures for assessment and grading in summer 2021. We have previously included some information about quality assurance, but the previous updates focused primarily on how and when students would be assessed and graded. Now that Year 11 & 13 students have completed all their assessments, we are in a position to share more detail about the quality assurance (QA) process and next steps. (NB: A small number of Year 12 students finishing courses this academic year will also receive centre assessed grades this summer).

A. Internal Quality Assurance (QA)

We have just concluded the final stages of an extensive internal QA process. We have developed a thorough system of scrutiny and review to ensure the subject assessed grades we submit are fair, evidence-based and determined consistently. This is a vital part of the grading process and has been ongoing since national 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 is focussed upon individually and their range of evidence and grades carefully considered in order to reach a subject 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



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information to make sure it was appropriate and reflected the way a course is assessed normally. We shared this information with students and parents/carers in May 2021. It can be found [here](#).

- 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. Assessment schedules for 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 and marking guidance and grade descriptors (from the relevant exam board).
- Moderation of marking across classes took place to ensure consistent application of the mark scheme and where there were multiple classes, teachers marked assessments from a range of classes, not just their own.
- 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 TGS (as well 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 that assessments have been adapted.
- Subject leaders met with one nominated member of the senior leadership team (to ensure consistency) to discuss and check the process for grading and verify that the results were accurate in terms of grades generated.

Stage 4: Assigning subject assessed grades

Our overriding aim was to make the approach to determining subject assessed grades consistent within each subject but also across all subjects. Many schools have referred to the grades awarded this year as Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). We took the decision that grades would be assigned at a subject level in the first instance, rather than at a class by class level. This not only helped to eliminate unconscious bias but also ensured that grades for each teaching group were awarded on the same basis. If every class within a subject had been determined independently by different members of staff then it is likely that the process and rationale used to reach the subject assessed grade would be slightly different for each class.

The final judgement about a subject assessed 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 subject assessed grades/eliminating administrative error

- A final check of 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 checks that they have been entered correctly
 - Subject leaders were required to additionally check that the grades had been entered correctly on to the portal.
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B. External Quality Assurance

Subject assessed grades were submitted last week to meet the national deadline on Friday 18th June 2021.

Between 21st June and 23rd June 2021, exam boards will contact schools to request a sample of the evidence they used to assign grades. Exam boards will decide which candidates to sample once they have received the subject assessed grades. They will then review this evidence between 23rd June and 16th July 2021. They will contact schools with any queries and may ask for additional samples if grades are very different to historic grades - or if they are unsure about some of the evidence.

C. Appeals

We firmly believe that because we have been able to consider a range of evidence for each student this will make grades this year fairer and a more accurate reflection of what students can do. In a normal year grades are based on a single set of exams, this year we have been able to draw on a range of evidence. In addition, you will see that we have been through a rigorous internal and external quality assurance process, to eliminate any administrative or procedural errors.

However, The Joint Qualifications Council (JCQ) have released guidance for students, parents and guardians which can be found [here](#). We have also summarised the appeals process using some FAQ below:

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**. So 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 (2021), 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?

The grounds for appeal are dictated by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). There are two stages to the appeals process.

Stage 1: Centre Review

- 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 e.g. did not undertake internal quality assurance.

Stage 2: Appeal to the exam board

- You think the school made an **unreasonable** exercise of academic judgement in the choice of evidence from which we determined your grade and/or in the determination of your grade from that evidence.
- You think the school did not apply the procedure correctly.
- The exam board made an administrative error.

What does 'unreasonable' mean?

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.

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.

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 stay, 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 subject assessed grade.

What's a priority appeal?

Priority appeals for Year 13 will be handled more quickly than other appeals, where possible before the UCAS advisory deadline of 8th September 2021.

Priority appeals are only open to Year 13 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 or conditional offer and to go through clearing instead, JCQ cannot offer you a priority appeal. Unfortunately, JCQ cannot offer priority appeals for GCSE students. 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 Mrs Knapton about your options. You may wish to go through clearing, or sit the autumn exams (2021) or summer exams next year (2022) 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. 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. 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 it to Mrs C Langford-Smith (Examinations Officer) c.langford-smith@tgs.starmat.uk.

What are the deadlines for priority appeals (Year 13 only)?

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 the Autumn 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 2021 and the deadline for submitting an awarding organisation appeal is 10th September 2021. 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 Subject Assessed Grades to any third party, including students and parents, until results day. 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 final submitted grades.

During the external quality assurance process taking place in June or July, our submitted grades 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 subject assessed grades, even if they haven't met the conditions of their offer.

In summary, if students think there has been a mistake made in calculating one of their grades, they can ask school to check if they have made an error. If schools report that they have not made an error and the student still wishes to appeal they can request that the school submits their evidence to the relevant exam board who will independently review it. At this point the exam board can **move the grade up, leave it the same or move it down** if they disagree with the school's judgement - or keep it the same, if they agree with the grade the school reached.

D. Receiving Results

Results days

10th August 2021: AS and A Level and Level 3 vocational grades are released. (Year 13 and some Year 12)

12th August 2021: GCSE and Level 2 vocational grades are released. (Year 11)

We would like to invite students in Year 11 and Year 13 to collect their grades from school. Students are not obliged to collect results, but it would be wonderful to see them. As always there will be people on hand to advise them if they are unsure about their next steps. Support with UCAS will be available for Year 13 students. Year 11 students will need an appointment with the Post-16 team if they have not achieved the entry requirements for one of their selected courses - or if they wish to enquire about a change of course. If results are not collected on the morning of relevant results day they will be directed to students on their school email. Students in Year 12 will receive results via their school email but can request an appointment if they wish to speak to someone.

All information about Centre Assessed Grades at TGS is available at:

<https://tgs.starmat.uk/curriculum-overview/centre-based-assessment-summer-2021/>

Further details about the time and venues for results collection which will need to be conducted under the prevailing coronavirus safe way of working will be issued for each year group separately by the end of term. Finally, we would like to thank all of our students for their cooperation during a difficult and unusual assessment period. We hope they enjoy a well-deserved break before embarking on their next phase of education, training or employment.

Yours sincerely,

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