



# Holy Family Catholic High School

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26<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Dear Parent,

## **Summer Exams 2021 - Quality assurance for GCSE, AS and A level: information for schools**

On Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> April, we received additional information from Ofqual about how they are going to check grades submitted by schools this summer. I have highlighted the key points below and at the end of this letter is the full communication from Ofqual.

Key points:

- Centres (schools) must submit all grades by 18 June and exam boards will review all grades as part of their quality assurance.
- The grades will also be an important factor that exam boards use to target their review of centre judgements.
- Once the grades are received, every centre will be asked to provide samples of student work.
- All centres will be asked to provide the evidence used to determine the grades for the students selected.
- Exam boards will decide on the subjects and the students (selected from across the grade range) and they will let centres know which subjects/students have been selected, in the week beginning 21 June.
- Centres will need to submit this evidence promptly – within 48 hours of the request being made.
- Exam board subject experts will review the evidence provided by a sample of centres.
- Exam boards will compare a centre's results and select centres where the proportion of grades in 2021 appears significantly higher or lower than results in previous years when exams took place – 2017, 2018 and 2019.
- Where exam boards have serious concerns about a centre, they could ask for more work to be provided. And in some cases, if the evidence does not support the grades submitted, centres will be asked to reconsider their grades. Exam boards may want to discuss the centre's grading decisions. Where the exam board disagrees with the centre's grade, it can withhold results.
- The process for vocational, technical and other general qualifications (VTQs) will be similar to that used for GCSE, AS and A level. It will be a multi-stage process involving internal quality assurance, records of decisions, samples of students' work and historical outcomes.

If you need anything clarified, please do not hesitate to contact us at school.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Symes

## **Ofqual Blog: Quality assurance for GCSE, AS and A level: information for schools and colleges**

Posted by: [Cath Jadhav](#), Posted on: 22 April 2021 - Categories: [A levels and GCSEs](#), [Vocational and technical qualifications](#)

With exams cancelled, summer 2021 grades will be determined by schools and colleges. Every year, there is teacher assessment in subjects with non-exam assessment and schools and colleges will be familiar with moderation arrangements. This summer, with exams cancelled, the context is very different, so the quality assurance (QA) process is different from the usual moderation process. This is a guide to what schools and colleges can expect.

### **Stage 1 - centre policies**

Every school and college must set out its approach in a centre policy for internal quality assurance, as [set out in the JCQ guidance](#). Exam boards are keen that centres understand what's expected and are on track to submit by the deadline. They will be phoning every centre to ask about key aspects of the centre policy. So every centre should expect a phone call in the coming weeks, if it hasn't already happened. Centres can now submit completed centre policies along with their centre policy summary. They must all be submitted by 30 April. Exam boards will review all of the summaries. Where there are concerns or questions arising from the summary or from the phone call, exam boards will review the full policy.

### **Stage 2 – virtual visits**

Exam boards will contact all centres to let them know either that their policy has been accepted or that they will receive a virtual visit. But centres don't need to wait to continue with their approach. Exam boards will arrange a visit where they have questions or concerns about a centre's policy. The aim of these visits is to make sure centres have appropriate arrangements in place for internal standardisation but the focus could be on any aspect of the centre's policy.

### **Stage 3 – sampling of centres' judgements**

Centres must submit all grades by 18 June and exam boards will review all grades as part of their quality assurance. The grades will also be an important factor that exam boards use to target their review of centre judgements.

Once the grades are received, every centre will be asked to provide samples of student work. Exam boards will request at least the following evidence:

- 1 A level subject (at least 5 students)
- 2 GCSE subjects, one of which is likely to be either English language or maths (at least 5 students for each)

Centres that offer only A levels or only GCSEs will be asked to submit only work for those qualifications.

All centres will be asked to provide the evidence used to determine the grades for the students selected. Exam boards will decide on the subjects and the students (selected from across the grade range) and they will let centres know which subjects/students have been selected, in the week beginning 21 June.

Centres will need to submit this evidence promptly – within 48 hours of the request being made – so it's important that centres' evidence and records are in good order ahead of that date.

Exam board subject experts will review the evidence provided by a sample of centres. Some of the centres will be picked at random, but making sure that all centre types and regions are included. Centres will also be selected based on other factors, including significant changes in entry patterns or where a centre is identified as needing additional support, for example because it is a new exam centre.

Exam boards will compare a centre's results and select centres where the proportion of grades in 2021 appears significantly higher or lower than results in previous years when exams took place – 2017, 2018 and 2019. Results for individual subjects, especially those with small cohorts, can vary more from one year to the next. So the comparison for a centre will be made at qualification level – for all GCSE subjects combined and all A level subjects combined.

Exam boards will prioritise for quality assurance checks those centres where results are more out of line with their historical results than other centres, including where grades are lower.

This doesn't mean centres must award grades to closely match those in previous years, or that the information from previous years should be used to suppress results. That's not the case. There can be good reasons for results to vary from one year to the next, and centres should record the reasons for any substantial variances, in line with the centre's policy. And the QA checks will focus on whether the range of evidence supports the grading judgments for those students.

If, having reviewed the work, exam boards have questions about how a centre has made grading decisions, the exam board will contact the centre.

Where exam boards have serious concerns about a centre, they could ask for more work to be provided. And in some cases, if the evidence does not support the grades submitted, centres will be asked to reconsider their grades. Exam boards may want to discuss the centre's grading decisions. Where the exam board disagrees with the centre's grade, it can withhold results.

The process for vocational, technical and other general qualifications (VTQs) will be similar to that used for GCSE, AS and A level. It will be a multi-stage process involving internal quality assurance, records of decisions, samples of students' work and historical outcomes. Training providers, colleges and schools offering VTQs will also need to ensure that they collect and store students' work, and keep records of their judgements and rationale.

VTQs are more diverse in size, shape and delivery than GCSE, AS and A levels, so the process will necessarily need to place different weight on different aspects and so will vary across qualifications, centres and awarding organisations. For some qualifications, this may require greater emphasis on sampling students' work. VTQ awarding organisations have put in place quality assurance processes that best fit their qualifications and the profile of the centres delivering their qualifications.

The QA process is important for students and their parents and carers to have confidence in the process for determining grades this summer. For GCSE, AS and A level, the exam boards have provided detailed guidance for centres and the process has been designed to support centres as they develop their policies and as they make their judgements. There is [more information on the JCQ website](#) or centres can contact their exam board or VTQ awarding organisation if they have any questions.

**Cath Jadhav**

Director of Standards and Comparability