



FEARNHILL SCHOOL

Headteacher – Ms E Ellis BA, MA

2nd July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers of Year 11 and 13

I am writing to give you important information about the awarding of grades in GCSE, BTEC and A Levels this summer. We have now submitted all Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) to the exam boards. The checking process is under way and there is nothing more to do until Results Days on Tuesday 10th August (A Level and Level 3 BTEC) and Thursday 12th August (GCSE and Level 2 BTEC). The following information is designed to help you understand how the process has worked and what you can do if you feel there is a problem with the grades your child is awarded.

How were my/my child's grades arrived at this year?

TAGs 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 TAGs 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 can I do if I am 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 and A 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 four main grounds for appeal, as laid down 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 have not properly followed our own process, as approved by the exam board. An example of this would be where a student has been told he/she should have received extra time for assessments but this was not given in a certain subject.
- You think the **academic judgement on the selection of evidence was unreasonable**: you think the evidence used to grade your son/daughter was not reasonable.
- You think the **academic judgement on the grade he/she was 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. Because of the

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flexibility of the approach this year, every school and college will have used different forms of evidence. Just because other forms of evidence may have been equally valid to use, it does not mean the selection of evidence in itself was 'unreasonable'.

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 TAG.

What is a priority appeal?

This is relevant to A Level and Level 3 BTEC students only. JCQ cannot offer priority appeals for GCSE students.

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. 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 do not get into my first choice of university?

Most importantly, don't panic. Speak to Mr Dixon or a member of the senior leadership team 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. 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 reached. At the centre

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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 a form, 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 we receive it.

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 Mr Dixon at ed.dixon10@fearnhill.herts.sch.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; 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 a student has not met his/her university conditional offer?

We are forbidden from disclosing the Teacher 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 TAG. During the external quality assurance process currently under way, our submitted TAGs 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 TAGs, even if they have not met the conditions of their offer.

I appreciate this is a lot of information and we are, as always, here to help. Please do get in touch if you would like more clarification on how these processes will work. All Fearnhill students will be supported

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with their next steps and we look forward to seeing you on results day, to celebrate the remarkable achievements of all our students in this extraordinary year.

Yours faithfully

Ms E Ellis
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