



WALTON HIGH

Leading Learning

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15 August 2020

Dear Parents

Post 16 results

I hope you and your family are having a relaxing and enjoyable summer break.

After a year like no other, Post-16 students at Walton High are celebrating success (in a socially distanced way we hope!) in their A Level and vocational courses. Students have worked hard over the past two years on their chosen pathways and have shown tremendous talent, creativity and dedication. After the cancellation of their exams and the abrupt end to their time at Walton High, our students showed, and continue to show, great resilience and maturity in these very uncertain times.

As always at this time of year, we want to celebrate our students' academic achievements.

We are extremely proud that, yet again, many students will be taking up offers at universities across the country to study a range of disciplines. Sam Tye's A*A*A grades will see him go to the University of Nottingham to read Economics and he will be joined by Ahmed Mustafa (A B B) studying Pharmacy. Walton High students will also be well represented at the University of Warwick with Max Tadman (A* A A) reading Maths; Tom Newby (A*A A) Biosciences and Lana Singleton (A*A A) Economics. Achieving A* A B Lydia Slater will move on to Milton Keynes College to study an Art Foundation course whilst Mattie Walton (A* A A B) will head to Loughborough University to study Maths and Statistics. Rebecca Rose is off to King's College London to read War Studies and Shirleen Naibala will study Finance and Business Management at the University of East Anglia.

Students who pursued an Applied General or Technical pathway are also celebrating success with many of the top performing students opting to study a range of medical related degrees. With her triple Distinction* Natalie Low will be studying Midwifery at the University of Northampton; Alannah Hancock (Dist, Dist, Dist) Mental Health Nursing at the University of Nottingham and Azheemah Awoyemi (Dist*, Dist, as well as an A Level in Psychology) Radiography at the University of Liverpool.

Roy Akintayo (Dist Dist) is going to read Business Management, Accounting and Finance at Nottingham Trent University. Owen Chow (Dist*, Dist*, Dist, Merit) intends to work for a year before heading off to university whilst Grace Spicer (Dist*, Dist, Dist, Dist) is applying for a number of highly competitive higher level apprenticeships.

In addition to going to university, students have won prestigious apprenticeships and employment opportunities: Harry Daniels (A B B C) secured one of only five Superyacht cadetships with the UKSA where he will gain a range of maritime qualifications on his journey to becoming a Master Mariner; Kathryn Vercueil won an internship as a Youth Pastor; Abundance Mpase earned an apprenticeship in Mechanical Engineering and will be based in Portsmouth.

We wish all our students happy and fulfilled lives and the very best in their chosen careers.

Comedy and farce turns to tragedy

It is not possible to watch the news without seeing the turmoil that currently exists within the English education system and we are conscious of the additional stress this has caused our students. We want to reassure parents that Walton High will continue to work tirelessly to promote our students' interests and, as far as possible, protect them from the negative consequences of the incomprehensible decisions of others.

With no exams, how were grades awarded?

In line with Ofqual guidance, teachers spent many hours evaluating a range of evidence before deciding on the Centre Assessed Grade (CAG) to award a student and then, as required by the regulations, ranked students within each grade. The process the school adopted was robust and we are confident that the CAGs submitted to exam boards were a fair and accurate reflection of a student's achievement.

Exam boards then used a computer algorithm provided by Ofqual to moderate the grades submitted by schools.

Unfortunately, it appears that the time spent on ensuring students were awarded an accurate grade for their achievements was a complete waste of time as the computer algorithm generated result was given precedent over the CAG.

Why do some people say that Centre Assessed Grades are too generous and therefore inaccurate?

Some people have argued that because teachers' predicted exam grades are often higher than what some students go on to achieve, they are therefore a less reliable indicator of achievement.

However, the opposite could equally be true. Teacher assessment is based on more evidence of what a student knows, understands and can do than is provided by performance in an exam, which can only ever be a snapshot in time. A student's performance in an exam can be influenced by a number of factors such as the topics chosen, the phrasing of the question, student's health on the day, whether the student is also having to cope with external pressures at the time, e.g. bereavement. All of these things can impact on the validity and reliability of exam results and this is before one takes into account the vagaries of the mark scheme and the competence (or otherwise) of the person marking the script.

Unfortunately, there would need to be significant systemic and cultural changes before the professional judgement and expertise of teachers is given the weight it is due and only then would all students receive the proper recognition for all their achievements.

What impact did the moderation process have on students' grades at Walton High?

As with all other schools, many of the grades submitted by Walton High were changed because of the algorithm used. The table below compares the proportion of grades changed nationally with the changes made to Walton High's CAGs. It shows that Walton High's students were badly affected by the algorithm's use.

Grade change	England	Walton High	
		Number of grades	Percentage
+1 grade	2%	11	4%
No Change	59%	121	49%
-1 grade	36%	99	40%
-2 or more grades	3.5%	16	7%

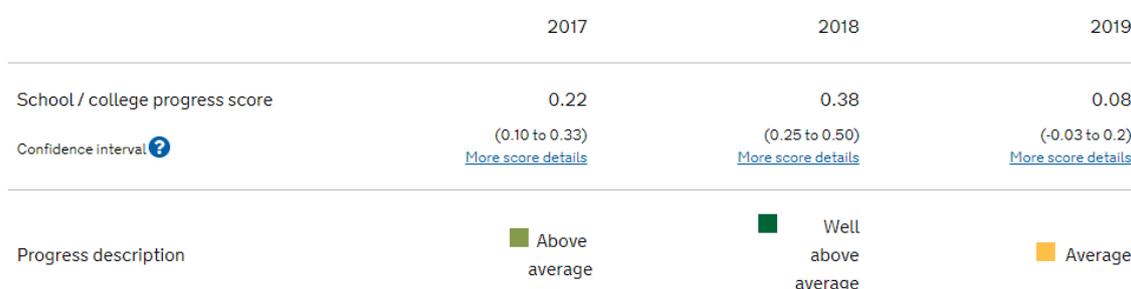
The table shows that it was the school's highest achieving students who were worst affected. One student even saw their A* CAG being lowered to a C grade by the computer!

CAG	Number of grades changed	Lowered by 1 grade	Lowered by 2 grades	Lowered by 3 grades
A*	17	13	3	1
A	19	13	6	0
B	30	24	5	1
C	29	29	0	0
D	16	16	0	0
E	4	4	0	0

As the weighting given to different factors used within the algorithm is a mystery, it is difficult to identify exactly why its use has had such a negative impact on so many of our students.

However, students who attend Walton High's Post-16 have historically made very good progress in academic courses and in 2018 the school was ranked in the top 2% of providers nationally.

Progress score



The dip in 2019 was as a result of unfortunate personal circumstances affecting a number of students. As these factors did not apply to this year's cohort, it seems to be harsh in the extreme that they should be disadvantaged as a result.

Another reason we know the lower results given to many of our students are inaccurate is supported by the impact of the changes to the CAG have had on the school's overall performance data. For at least the past three years, on average, students have achieve a C+ grade with about 12% of students achieving AAB+ grades in qualifying subjects. However, the computer algorithm's lowering of so many grades (especially the A*-B grades) has depressed these figures as shown below.

	2020	2019	3 year average
Average Grade	C	C+	C+
Average Points per entry	30.95	33.17	33.73
AAB+	4%	13%	12%

What is Walton High going to do to correct inaccurate and unfair results?

Walton High has tried to discuss its concerns with the MPs for Milton Keynes but unfortunately neither was available on Wednesday and they still have not returned our call.

Ofqual, the Government body that is meant to oversee standards in education, has not yet provided details of the appeals process. However, on Wednesday afternoon, (just a few hours before students received their results on Thursday morning), the DfE published a press statement on its website (until Saturday afternoon, there had been no direct communication with schools) setting out its "Triple Lock" proposal ([Annex A](#)).

The “Triple Lock” proposal is a typical political response to a problem. It is designed to give the illusion that the Government is listening to concerns and acting to right wrongs. Whereas in reality it is a deflection technique designed to kick the problem into the future when they hope people will have moved on to other issues.

At Walton High, using students’ mock results will improve 30 A level grades. However, many of the CAGs that were lowered were one grade higher than the mock grade (this is the usual progress made by most students between their mock and the final exam) so these will not benefit from this concession. Another group of students who will not benefit are those studying vocational pathways, as due to the modular nature of these courses they do not sit mock exams.

The proposal to allow students to sit exams in November is nonsensical as students have been out of school since March and schools will not have the spare capacity to provide lessons before the exams are sat. Quite simply, this is again setting young people up to fail. By the time these exams are marked and grades awarded students will have missed out on a university place for this year so they may as well resit the entire year and hope the same thing does not happen again in 2021!

On Saturday afternoon, schools received an email from the Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, in which he continues to try to justify the unjustifiable. The lack of any apology or contrition is staggering. When the appeals process is eventually finalised and published, we will appeal all the grounds that are applicable to Walton High as well as supporting any student’s request for an appeal if the grade they have been awarded is lower than the CAG submitted by the school.

What will happen when the GCSE results are published?

Who knows?! However, we want to reassure parents that for students wanting to continue their studies at Walton High, if, as a result of the CAG being lowered by the exam board, their child no longer meets the entry requirement for their chosen programme of study, we will use the CAG grade for admission purposes.

As we are doing for Post-16 students, we will support any appeal against the lowering of a CAG in any subject.

Parents should be reassured that although the school will obviously be very much focused on ensuring that all students return in a safe way in September, we will also be devoting a significant amount of senior staff time to ensuring that our students are not further disadvantaged as a result of the latest Government debacle.

If the last few months has revealed anything, it is that insufficient weight is given to the needs and interests of young people. However, you should rest assured that Walton High will continue to advocate on their behalf.

With kind regards



Michelle Currie
Executive Principal

Annex A

DfE Press Release: 14:00 12 August 2020

Triple lock for students ahead of A level and GCSE results

Students could receive the higher result out of their calculated grade, valid mock grade, or autumn exam grade to bolster fairness.

A new 'triple lock' process will give young people added security as they receive their grades this year, the Education Secretary has announced.

Students could accept their calculated grade, appeal to receive a valid mock result, or sit autumn exams to ensure the achievements of young people are recognised.

Ofqual has been asked to determine how and when valid mock results can be used to calculate grades.

All outcomes will hold the same value for universities, colleges and employers, building on the significant number of students who will still progress as a result of their calculated grades. Similar arrangements will apply to vocational and technical qualifications.

The move comes as the Government also announces an extensive support package for all schools, colleges and further education providers to run a full exam series in the autumn.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

"Every young person waiting for their results wants to know they have been treated fairly. By ensuring students have the safety net of their mock results, as well as the chance of sitting autumn exams, we are creating a triple lock process to ensure confidence and fairness in the system.

No one wanted to cancel exams – they are the best form of assessment, but the disruption caused by Covid-19 meant they were not possible.

This triple lock system will help provide reassurance to students and ensure they are able to progress with the next stage of their lives."

This will provide an additional safety net to the system of calculated grades, which is the fairest possible approach in the absence of exams. The grades students receive on Thursday will be based on the judgement of their school or college, and have been moderated by exam boards to make sure the same standard is applied for all students, whichever school, college or part of the country they come from.

Students who would like to use a valid mock result will be able to do so through the appeals process, with individuals notifying their school or college who will provide evidence of their mock results to their exam board.

Annex B



Department for Education

Message to all head teachers and college principals

I am writing to you about this year's A and AS level and GCSEs results, as I am aware that many schools and colleges have concerns about how the A and AS level results released this week were arrived at and the impact on your students.

I wanted to assure you first that the grades students have received are based on the judgement of their school or college, and have been moderated by exam boards to make sure the same standard is applied to all students. I am confident that the results are fair for the vast majority of students, but that some will feel that they could have done better. That is why we have introduced a triple lock to give students an added safety net. Students will be able to accept their calculated grade, appeal on the basis of a valid mock result or sit an exam in the autumn. There is no perfect replacement for exams, but this approach ensures fairness for young people so that they can progress to the next stage of their lives.

Despite the unprecedented circumstances, grades have remained broadly stable with a 2.5 percentage point rise in As and A*s at A level. A record number of 18 year olds have been accepted into university, including a record number from the most disadvantaged backgrounds – up 7.3% from last year.

I realise, however, that there will be cases where schools and colleges feel that the results their student have received are not fair. Whilst the arrangements in place this summer are the fairest possible in the absence of exams, any process for calculating grades will inevitably produce some results which need to be queried. For that reason, the Government has been clear since the decision was taken to cancel exams that we must have a robust appeals process in place to allow any anomalies to be addressed, so that we can be confident that students can ultimately get the grades they deserve. [Ofqual announced the details of the appeals process on 6 August](#) and has also [published a guide for students on appeals](#).

I understand, however, that many schools and colleges are unclear about what the rules for appeals are and how to go about appealing. The [process for appeals is set out in JCQ guidance](#) and this too will be updated shortly. All appeals must start by contacting the relevant exam board. The detail for how to do this is can be found in Appendix A on page 9 of the JCQ appeals guidance but in brief the arrangements for each board are:

- AQA – download the Standardisation Report for the subject you want to appeal in (this can be found on e-AQA), click on the subject-specific link at the bottom of the report and complete the webform.
- OCR – use the [OCR Interchange](#)
- Pearson – use [Edexcel Online](#)
- WJEC – use [WJEC's secure website](#)

As with request for reviews of marking or moderation in a normal year, appeals must be submitted by the school or college, rather than by individual students or their families. The deadline for submission is 17 September. Any queries on the appeals process should be directed to the relevant exam board's Customer Services Team.

In terms of the grounds for appeal, schools and colleges may appeal in the following circumstances:

- If they believe something has gone wrong in processing their results – for example, if they believe they have made an error when submitting information on their students; or similarly, that the exam board made a mistake when calculating, assigning or communicating a grade. We expect that any such mistakes will be quickly found and corrected. It is important to state that where the rank ordering has been disrupted, this constitutes a data error and will be corrected. Don't hesitate to contact your Board in this event.
- If they can provide evidence that grades are lower than expected because previous cohorts of students taking that subject in the school or college (whose results have been taken into account in the standardisation model) are not sufficiently representative of this year's students. Examples of this might be:
 - if a single-sex school has changed to co-educational
 - if the school or college has had a significant change in leadership or governance and can provide objective evidence that its previous grades are not a reliable indicator of its 2020 results
 - where the school or college experienced a monumental event (for example flooding or fire which meant students had to re-locate) which affected one year's results in the historical data used in the model, but would not have impact on this year's students

- where – because of the ability profile of the students – the school or college was expecting results this year to show a very different pattern of grades from results in previous years. That could include where the grades of unusually high or low ability students have been affected by the model because they fall outside the pattern of results in the school or college in recent years
- or where the profile of grades awarded is significantly below the profile awarded in recent years and this cannot be explained by changes in the ability profile of the students.
- In these cases, evidence will need to be submitted to the exam board which will consider the strength of the case put forward before reaching a decision. The exam boards have provided information to each school or college alongside its results setting out which data was used in the model, to help you to understand how your students' grades were calculated. If you are unclear about what kind of evidence you should put forward, you should talk to your exam board.
- It has been brought to my attention that certain large or young centres and their students have been affected by some of the scenarios set out here. The Boards and Ofqual have assured me that such Centres will qualify for urgent attention.
- Finally, where a student has a valid mock result which is higher than the grade they have been awarded and wishes to have their mock result stand instead. Ofqual has issued [criteria on what constitutes a valid mock result](#) and where schools or colleges provide the necessary declaration we expect such appeals to be dealt with very quickly.

I know that many of your students will be anxious about what the need for an appeal will mean for them if they have a place at university or college which is dependent on the outcome of the appeal. I want to assure you that the Department has been working with the higher and further education sectors over recent months to ensure that they understand the need for flexibility, and the Ofqual Chief Regulator has written directly to all providers to make the same point. The Minister for Universities has also written directly to university Vice Chancellors to reinforce this message, and in particular to ask universities wherever possible to hold open places for any students who are dependent on the outcome of an appeal in order to meet the terms of their offer. Where a student's university place is dependent on the appeals process, exam boards are committed to doing all that is possible to resolve appeals by 7 September – which is UCAS' advisory deadline for applicants to meet academic offer conditions.

Finally, I wanted to let you know that given the extraordinary circumstances this year, we have decided that all appeals will be free. It is crucial that there are no financial barriers between students and the grades they have worked hard for, and that their schools and colleges should not have to foot the bill for any appeals that are necessary in order to ensure that students receive those grades.

The exam boards will still invoice schools and colleges for unsuccessful appeals as in a normal year, but the Department will reimburse the cost. Further details of how to claim will be made available in early September.

Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP

Minister of State for School Standards