



Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP, Chair
Education Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

30 June 2020

Dear Mr Halfon,

I am writing following Ofqual's appearance at your Committee's Inquiry on the impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services on 10 June 2020. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee and I am now providing further information as requested.

As we explained at the Committee, we have put in place exceptional arrangements to respond to the unprecedented circumstances caused by the pandemic. We are regulating to ensure that as many learners as possible receive their qualification results this summer so they can progress to the next stages of their lives without further disruption. It is our role to make sure that the arrangements are as fair as possible and that results are valid and reliable and carry the same currency as in any other year.

Your committee also requested more information about our plans to provide information for students and their parents and carers about the appeals arrangements that will be in place for GCSEs, AS and A levels this year. We are committed to doing all that we can to make sure that students are not disadvantaged by these unprecedented circumstances, including allowing for an appeal where appropriate.

We have carried out a public [consultation](#) on the exceptional arrangements for this year, including appeals. Informed by responses to our consultation, we have confirmed that appeals should be allowed where a school or college (centre) believes it has made an error when submitting its information, or if the centre believes an exam board made a mistake when calculating, assigning or communicating a grade.

So, a student will be able to ask their centre to check whether they made an error when submitting a centre assessment grade and including them in the centre's rank order and if they think the exam board made a mistake in processing this information to determine their grade. We expect that any

mistakes will be quickly found and corrected. As in a normal year, it is a student's centre that decides whether to submit an appeal on a student's behalf. If the centre chooses not to do this they must, as under existing arrangements, have a procedure which allows the student to request a review of the centre's decision not to appeal to an exam board.

We have also confirmed that if students or others have concerns about bias, discrimination or any other factor that suggests that a centre did not behave with care or integrity when determining centre assessment grade and / or rank order information, they should normally raise these concerns with their centre in the first instance. In some cases, where there is evidence of serious malpractice on the part of the centre, it may be appropriate to bring those concerns directly to the exam board in the first instance. School and colleges have obligations in respect of discrimination under Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010 with which they must comply.

We require exam boards to consider such cases as potential malpractice or maladministration. They must investigate cases where there is evidence to suggest that the centre assessment grades and / or rank order information submitted to them may not have been determined appropriately. Where the investigation finds that the centre assessment grade or rank order information was determined inappropriately and that this has led to an incorrect final result, the exam board must consider the action needed, including correcting that result if it is appropriate to do so. Such allegations would be very serious, and we expect them to be rare, but this route is an important safeguard for students and their overall confidence in this year's grading arrangements. Exam boards will provide more information for students about this process as soon as possible.

We, and the exam boards, are committed to helping schools, colleges, students, parents and carers understand the options available to them if they are dissatisfied with their results. This means setting out the routes for appeals and malpractice or maladministration concerns available to them, as set out above, as well as the opportunity for students to take exams in the autumn.

As in previous years, we will provide a guide for students on the arrangements for this year. Our focus will be to make this as straightforward and accessible as possible, explaining to students both how their grades were calculated this year and the options available if they believe their result was not properly produced. This will include our expectations about who can support students in understanding both the options available to them if they wish to query their result and how to access those routes. We will publish this guide by the end of July. We will work with a range of representative groups to increase the reach of this information to students and their parents and carers. In addition, we will require exam boards to publish information about their arrangements for appeals and malpractice or maladministration concerns and we will ensure that the information they provide is clear and accessible.

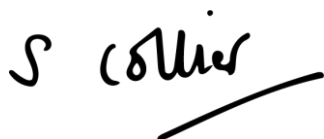
The committee requested that we have a helpline available to students and their parents or carers to talk about the arrangements for appeals or malpractice or maladministration concerns, as well as any other questions they may have about their results this summer. We are working with the

National Careers Service who run the government's national helpline for students on and around results days so that they can support students when they receive their results and can provide information about the appeals process. As this national service is put in place by the government to support students each year, its staff are well placed to advise on a wide range of issues, including on appeals, and they can pass any complex enquiries to us if needed. Students and their parents and carers will also be able to contact Ofqual directly if they prefer. We will publicise both the National Careers Service helpline and our public enquiries helpline to students and their parents and carers.

You also asked me about the ethnic diversity of Ofqual's senior leadership team. I can confirm that 15% of all Ofqual staff are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, compared with 7% of our wider leadership team. None of the five members of Ofqual's Executive team is from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. We recognise that we need to do more to increase our Black, Asian and minority ethnic representation at senior levels, as set out in our [Diversity and Inclusion strategy](#) that we published earlier this year.

I am happy to provide further detail on this or any other issue if the Committee would find it useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Collier', with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end of the name.

Sally Collier
Chief Regulator