

## Written evidence submitted by a Parent

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** - On 18th March 2020 Mr Williamson announced in the House of Commons that public exams would not take place but that the government would, '**make sure that no child is unfairly penalised.**' There is very strong evidence to demonstrate that many students have been unfairly penalised. [School Name] Student [Student Name] had UCAS predicted grades of A\*A\*A\* - his CAGs for A levels are ABC. He lost his place at Nottingham University Medical School and Cardiff University Medical School. He has been unable to move on to the next stage of education. The evidence below shows why the CAGS are unreliable and the detrimental impact on [Name] and other students in a similar situation. Mistakes have clearly been made and a **wider right of appeal** against CAGS should be given to [Name] and students in similar positions. Also for Medical Students universities should be encouraged to **honour the offers** they have made to ensure no student is disadvantaged. They should not let the inconsistent CAGs be the deciding factor on who secures a place to study medicine. The outcome of these mistakes have a significant impact on [Name] future career.
  
2. **LACK OF USE OF PREDICTED GRADES** - UCAS report states 90 % of predicted grades are accurate within 1 grade. A\*A\*A\* for UCAS. Statistically [Name] should have achieved at least AAA even if the predictions were 'ambitious'. Many students has a similar disparity.
  
3. **LACK OF CONSIDERATION OF GCSE RESULTS** - Department of Education statistics show the most likely A level outcomes based on GCSE results. This data was not used. [Name] achieved top grades - 9s in each subject. Therefore the likelihood of only getting C grades at A level is less than 5%, but A\*/A grade being over 75%. CAG for Chemistry puts [Name] in the bottom 7% of the school this shows a massive inconsistency for someone the school was confident would achieve top grades for a medical school application especially considering what a massive drop in performance this represents when he achieved the 5th highest GCSE results in the school 7x9s, 3x8s and 3xA\* receiving an academic achievement award in 2018 from WCGS. Report from Cambridge Assessment can be found here <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/153531-progression-from-gcse-to-as-and-a-level-2010-.pdf>  
Report DFE-RR195 can be found here [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/183942/DFE-RR195.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183942/DFE-RR195.pdf)
  
4. **BIAS AGAINST MEDICINE, DENTISTRY AND VETERINARY APPLICANTS** - Students applying for these university places need to undertake a range of work experience and voluntary work during the lower 6th year. There are also rigorous selection exams – UCAT and BMAT to study for. Then each university has a set of interviews to prepare for. Such students have to balance A level work with these demands, yet their topic test and mock exams results are ranked against students aiming for other degree courses who do not need to do any of this extra work. Therefore the tests favour non-medical students. [Name] had two days of

interviews at Oxford University the day before his school mock exams. The teachers told him not to revise for the mocks but focus on the university interviews. Then the mock data was used for the final A level grades. The teachers now say their advice was wrong, but could not take this into account when giving the CAGS. As an indication of the impact on medical students – [School Name] usually achieves 16 successful applications to medical schools – this year only 3 gained a place. The Head teacher acknowledged that this group has been badly affected by the CAG system. [School Name] Headmaster has acknowledged this in his letter Appendix 1

5. **LACK OF USE OF HOLISTIC INFORMATION** - BMAT, UCAT and GCSE exams should be given more emphasis as these were the elements that medical students were advised to concentrate on. This data secured Joe 4 medical interviews including Oxford in exam conditions. [Name] achieved well above average scores for UCAT and BMAT that are designed for those who are very academically able. This further demonstrates a C grade at A level is not a reflection of his academic ability.
  
6. **UNRELIABILITY OF INTERNAL TESTS** - End of topic tests are unreliable - teachers were aware that some students shared content. This data should be removed from any calculations. Verbal warnings were given during the school terms, but this data has still been used. Sections of the paper were often peer marked and in both subjects tests were not undertaken in official exam conditions allowing opportunities for marks to be inflated by some pupils. This puts students who did not attempt to cheat at a disadvantage and rewards the dishonest behaviour of some.
  
7. **TEACHERS ACKNOWLEDGE RESULTS NOT ACCURATE REFLECTION** - Although the guidance stated that **there is unlikely to be anyone better placed than your teacher to judge your grade if the exams took place**, it was not possible for schools to consider key data provide the correct grades. The Head of [Name] 6th Form stated that, had Joe sat the exams, he would likely have achieved 3 As, not ABC. Surely this was the key element of the government policy to ensure grades were a fair reflection of teachers' expectations and not just based on statistics from exams that were believed to be insignificant by pupils and teachers at the time they were taken. All the advice on not prioritising elements making up the centre assessment grades that [Name] has followed in good faith, the use of end of subject assessments, the inadequate adjustment for prior attainment and medicine associated workload as well as the dropping of further maths are all extenuating circumstances that should have been taken into account when allocating his Centre Assessment Grades.
  
8. **UNFAIRNESS OF OCTOBER EXAMS** Students have received no formal education since March. The full syllabus for the subjects have not been covered. There was around 6 weeks from CAG results to sitting full A level exams with no further input from schools. Some students will be able to afford private tutors – putting those on low incomes at a further disadvantage. [Name] has less than 2 month to secure top grades while also having to re-sit the UCAT medical exam to allow him to apply next year. A tall order in normal

circumstances but even more so having been out of a school environment for so long and in the midst of the Covid pandemic with the associated detrimental impacts on mental well being.

9. **GUIDANCE FROM MEDICAL SCHOOLS** - Of additional concern is the current guidelines on resits at Medical schools, limiting options as no school will accept resits if the first sittings in any subject was less than a B. Due to the unreliability of CAGs this should not be applied this year.
  
10. **IMPACT OF The U Turn on the Ofqual Moderation** model puts those students at [School Name] at further disadvantage as the school followed the Ofqual guidance strictly to standardise grades to ensure they were close to the 3 year average. Other schools did not with the average of 35% being downgraded and some as much as 80% before the U turn. As highlighted by [School Name] Headmaster Letter Appendix 2. [Name] is therefore competing with students who have inflated grades to gain a place at medical school. The lack of any standardisation across A level grades puts him at a severe disadvantage when his school were very strict in their application of the guidance. To enable results from different schools to be comparable [School Name] and other schools who standardised their grades would need to have their grades increased. Medical Schools should also be encouraged to honour the offers made to Medical School applicants.

**Appendix 1 – letter from Head of [School Name] to parents in response to concerns, highlighting impact on prospective medics:**

Dear Parents,

The School and assigned members of the Local Board of Governors have received and noted the contents of your email and attached letter .

We would like to reassure you that as a school, [School Name] is doing all we can to support students in accessing their chosen universities. We acknowledge and understand that this whole process has been extremely distressing for a number of individuals, ***especially those applying to medicine, and as a school, we will continue to work tirelessly on their behalf.***

In terms of moving forward, we would point you towards the Ofqual guidance on appeals which can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/909525/Information\\_for\\_students\\_about\\_malpractice\\_20200814\\_1218\\_-\\_access.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/909525/Information_for_students_about_malpractice_20200814_1218_-_access.pdf) . This will give you more detail on how appeals are working this year.

Parents, if you believe your child is eligible for this appeals criteria, we would ask that you contact the School directly so that a discussion can take place and a decision can be made over whether to lodge an appeal. If you disagree with the School's decision, you can request a second opinion from another senior member of the School staff. Furthermore, if you feel that your son or daughter has suffered from bias or discrimination in the way that their Centre Assessment Grade has been generated, please proceed to our School Complaints Policy which can be found here: <https://www.folio-education.co.uk/about/key-documents-policies>.

Once again, please be assured that [School Name] is as always, working to support students and families.

Yours faithfully,

1. [Name] (Headmaster) and [Name] (Chair of the Local Advisory Board)

## Appendix 2

Dear parents,

Thank you for your email, your patience, and for the care and love that you are showing for your children - they are very lucky to have such dedicated advocates. Please see below the wording that I sent to the Secretary of State for Education, the Department for Education and Ofqual (copying in the Association of School and College Leaders, the Grammar School Heads Association and Elliot Colburn MP) yesterday afternoon:

I write to express my deep concern about the fairness and parity of grades that A Level and GCSE candidates have received this summer following the government's u-turn on the agreed moderation process. The staff of [School Name] followed Ofqual's guidance very closely when generating Centre Assessment Grades. Knowing how exam boards would moderate our Centre Assessment Grades to create final Calculated Grades ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/887018/Summer\\_2020\\_Awarding\\_GCSEs\\_A\\_levels\\_-\\_Info\\_for\\_Heads\\_of\\_Centre\\_22MAY2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/887018/Summer_2020_Awarding_GCSEs_A_levels_-_Info_for_Heads_of_Centre_22MAY2020.pdf) pp.11-12), we were robust in our procedures to ensure that the overall pattern of results given did not deviate too widely from previous patterns of attainment and the overall expected level of performance given prior attainment. As a result of this just 12% of our grades were moderated down at A Level and 2% moderated up. I do not have the statistics for GCSE as the process was all but abandoned but I suspect it would have been similar.

I was aghast on A Level Results Day when I learned that the average school had 35% of grades moderated down and felt great relief that, in the main, our teachers had kept tight control of who would receive what grade and that consequently the process would be much fairer with fewer random students being moderated down than in other schools. The resulting u-turn by the government to give all students their original Centre Assessment Grade or higher has therefore put the students of [School Name] at a gross disadvantage. Because our staff issued Centre Assessment Grades broadly in line with prior attainment patterns and other schools have not, our students have not benefited from the rampant grade inflation that this practice in other schools has caused. This is inequitable and unacceptable .

I would therefore request that you inform me and other Headmasters in my position (presumably 50% of us) of how we can right this wrong, be it through increasing our Centre Assessment Grades retrospectively so that our grade inflation is in line with the national average or by allowing us to increase more than 23% of our grades, again to be in line with the national average.

August 2020