

Written evidence submitted by Mr Vignesh Iyer

To the subcommittee,

I would like this shared with every member of the committee. I have no material evidence (save my past grades and GCSE certificates which I cannot send you) or data to help advance my cause. I plead with you to be considerate and read this and understand the effect that Covid-19 and Ofqual have had on people like me.

I write to you as a last resort, to plead with you to put pressure on Ofqual to reconsider the unjust notion that a student's grades can be determined by the performance of past cohorts.

Just a few months ago, before the world turned on its head, I remember sitting in a school assembly with my friend Kyle, and hearing our Head of House (our chemistry teacher) proudly announce to the school the news that two of the students from Rivers Academy West London had been successful in getting offers from Oxford. Such events are rare and caused quite a stir in our school and community. I felt compelled to get the grades to meet the offer not only to do my teachers and all those who have supported me proud, but to show to the younger years at school that through hard work, you can achieve anything you want.

Ofqual's decision would cause chaos not only for the grades and futures of high achieving students from relatively low achieving schools, but also play into the narrative that the education system is set to ensure that those from underprivileged backgrounds such as myself cannot succeed. I was an optimist for a long time and considered the fact that if I worked hard and achieved what I could with the support of my teachers, I would be able to prove the system wrong. However, the fact that my own past record is not even being considered is disheartening to say the least.

I set my school's record at GCSE level, and was on track to do the same for A Levels. I do not say this to toot my own horn, but to highlight that in a school where getting students a 4 in English and Maths remains the priority, my grades and many of my peers remain anomalous, and the collective data is not a fair representation of our grades. If we were to be judged by our whole cohort's GCSE grades, many of our predictions would look wildly out of place, and despite all classwork and mock exam grades pointing to the contrary, we would receive grades that are not a fair reflection of the hard work of our teachers and

ourselves. In fact, our school may be penalised for inflating grades, when in reality they are only being realistic with the evidence available.

There is no recourse for appeal of these grades and no set timetable for the autumn exams should we be forced to take them to prove we are deserving of the seats we won at universities we have been told “people like us” don’t belong in. If you do not make changes soon, these anxieties will turn into a bitter reality, one that will not only be cruel to us, but to our communities and reinforce the divide and lack of social mobility by showing that despite all that has been achieved at an individual level, the reputations that precede us are what we are to be judged by and held to.

I have also written my MP (Seema Malhotra, Feltham and Heston) regarding this issue and she is also trying to see if this resolved. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, it means a lot if you would consider putting pressure on Ofqual to make changes to its policy. If you would like me to testify any evidence in person, I will be more than happy to do so.

Regards,

Vignesh Iyer

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