

Written evidence submitted by Smith, Low, Hong and Hart

We are all students from the same sixth form that feel highly disadvantaged and frustrated due to the standardisation model by Ofqual.

Based on our predicted grades and our grades throughout the last 2 years, we are all around the grade range of AAA~A*A*A*. This shows how hard we have worked, dedicating all our time and efforts to secure the highest grade we personally can. However, now, all our efforts are about to go in vain. Despite the fact that we were all accepted to top universities in the UK, including LSE, Oxford, and Cambridge, our dreams are about to get abolished. But the worst part is that it will not be because we did not work hard enough. Instead, it is due to the fact that we all go to a school with low historical grades in all subjects. Even if our teachers gave us 3A*s, we will inevitably be downgraded if Ofqual does not amend its standardisation model.

Here is the reason why:

Taking the example of psychology, our school ONLY has 5 exam results over the duration of 2017, 2018, and 2019 due to the fact that we are a small/new school. What is even worse in this situation is the fact that all those 5 grades were B or below. This is solely due to the fact that our upper cohort were not very academic and cared more about 'having fun' in school. However, this year, our cohort is different. Since (and even before) GCSEs, we worked extremely diligently for everything academic related. However, yet again, nobody will believe us.

If our school has not received grades above Bs in each subject, even if we are a high A*, we would be downgraded to a B. Ultimately, this means that we will be unable to go to our first choice of uni, not to mention our second choice. Every individual, even someone that doesn't study A levels can tell you how absurd it is that a grade A* is being reduced to a B. Imagine a top student with A*A*A* ending up with a BBB. I question Ofqual and the government as to whether this makes sense.

If it was the case that we could submit evidence (like mock exams) to the exam boards, and then we got a lower grade based on the evidence, it would be rather understandable. To be honest, if this had happened, we wouldn't be able to blame the government nor Ofqual for anything as this grade is solely based on our work. HOWEVER, this is not the case for the current standardisation model. Rather than looking at each student subjectively, Ofqual is grading students without the consideration of individual differences. JUST BECAUSE our upper cohorts performed badly, they have to assume that this year's cohort will perform the same. What is most frustrating about this is the fact that we CANNOT do anything about this. We can't even blame ourselves for getting a low grade. Us students are being judged upon factors (like historical results) which we had ZERO influence on.

Despite this, all Ofqual says is “we will ensure fair grades to all students and allow them to progress to their next stage in life”. Here, we all question what fairness is to you. For us, fairness is not about statistics and satisfying the majority. For us, fairness is EVERY student getting what they deserve.

Moreover, the government also says ‘you can just take the exams in Autumn, what’s the big deal here?’. For us students that have experienced school closures since March, preparing for the exams is close to impossible. Every student has lost their motivation and energy. Moreover, if we find out about our results in mid-August, we will have less than 2 months to prepare. Dear government, this is not a simple matter as you believe it is. It may cost us a whole year combined with an unbelievable amount of stress.

Dear government and Ofqual, while you may truly believe that your model is fair for the majority, please remember that you should not group us students in majorities and minorities. Instead, you should look at each student INDIVIDUALLY for their own talents. Even if you are able to provide fairness to 80% of students, please remember that there are the other 20% of students that are faced with a dark future. This isn’t a numbers game. This is about us students and our future. Please. PLEASE don’t ignore the minority.

We only hope that the government is able to open their ears and listen to the desperate voices of aspiring and talented students that are shouting for help. The time is now. Please listen to our voices.

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