

Alderbrook School

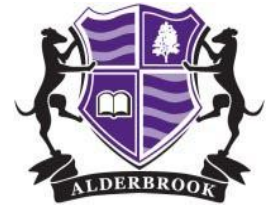
Blossomfield Road
Solihull
West Midlands
B91 1SN

Tel: 0121 704 2146

Email: office@alderbrook.solihull.sch.uk

Web: www.alderbrookschool.co.uk

Company registered England & Wales no. 07687619



9th July 2021

Dear Students and Parents/Carers,

Processes and Appeals for Summer Assessments 2021

I am writing to give you more information about the results and appeals processes for this year. We are confident that students will receive fair and accurate grades having worked tirelessly to ensure a rigorous process has been followed. This letter summarises the key procedures we have followed, and outlines the appeals process which JCQ have now issued.

This term student grades are being reviewed internally and externally by examination boards. Year 12s and 13s will receive their results on 10 August and Year 11s will receive their results on 12 August. Details and times for this will be communicated shortly.

Teachers have undertaken very thorough standardisation and moderation processes, guided by JCQ and supported by professional organisations whilst working closely with colleagues in other schools. Our Centre Policy provides the full detail of our processes, and this has been approved by JCQ/examination boards:

https://www.alderbrookschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ABK_signed-Centre-Policy.pdf

The following FAQs may help to summarise and clarify any key points, and explain how the appeals process will work:

How were my grades arrived at this year?

Grades this summer were based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). TAGs were submitted to the exam boards by us as a holistic assessment of students' performance in a subject, following a rigorous process of assessment, moderation and quality assurance.

These grades are being approved by the relevant exam board, following external quality assurance checks. In some cases, the TAGs we submitted may be reviewed by the exam board, who hold the right to ask us to submit an alternative grade. However, any changes to the grades we submitted will be done by professional teachers or reviewers; this year no grades have been changed as a result of an algorithm. All grades are based on evidence produced by students, and they were not predictions.

What evidence has been used to arrive at my grade?

We have informed you that the mini and hall assessments which took place from 19 April onwards, have been our primary source of evidence, where the greatest weighting is likely to be applied. This is because they provided a high level of control in how they were administered, and gave students more time to learn and prepare. We asked you to inform us if there have been any mitigating

circumstances, and where this was the case, we may have drawn on a wider evidence base. All evidence we have used has been shared with you on our website:

<https://www.alderbrookschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Evidence-being-used-to-inform-final-grades-Levels-1-and-2-1-1.pdf>

<https://www.alderbrookschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Evidence-being-used-to-inform-final-grades-A-Level-GCE-Qualifications-1.pdf>

What do I do if I'm not happy with my grade?

If you are not happy with your grade, it is advisable firstly to consider re-sitting your examinations. The design, content and assessment of these papers will be the same as in a normal year. More information about this resit window will follow. We recommend that you consider this option rather than appealing, as you have the opportunity improve your grade using this process. The highest grade, whether it is the Teacher Assessed Grade or the re-sit grade, will stand.

All students have the opportunity to appeal their grade if they meet the eligibility criteria (see below). **It is important to note however that an appeal may result in a grade being lowered**, staying the same, or going up. **If a student puts in an appeal and their grade is lowered, they will receive the lower mark.** We would therefore recommend caution before making this decision.

What are the grounds for appeal?

There are four main grounds for appeal, as dictated by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). They are:

- You think we have made an **administrative error**: an example of this would be putting the wrong information into a spreadsheet.
- You think we have made a **procedural error**: this means we haven't properly followed our own process, as approved by the exam board.
- You think the **academic judgement on the selection of evidence was unreasonable** or you think the evidence used to grade you was not reasonable.
- You think the **academic judgement on the grade you were given was unreasonable**.

What can you NOT appeal for?

- Students being entered or not entered for a particular qualification. In this circumstance, the student should raise this concern directly with the school, by emailing exams@alderbrook.solihull.sch.uk
- Issues concerning teaching and learning over the course of study.

What does 'unreasonable' mean?

'Unreasonable' is a technical term in this context and means that no educational professional acting reasonably could have selected the same evidence or come up with the same grade. This means that just because other forms of evidence may have been equally valid to use, the selection of evidence is **not unreasonable**. Because of the flexibility of the approach this year, every school and college will have used different forms of evidence and teachers selected the evidence to be used. This is because that evidence needs to fulfil criteria making it viable to be selected.

It also means that the independent reviewers will not remark or grade students' evidence. Instead, they will look to see whether any teacher acting reasonably could have arrived at the same grade.

What will be the outcome of an appeal?

At either stage of the appeals process (see 'What are the two stages of an appeal?' below), a student's grade may go up, stay the same, or go down. **When placing an appeal the student will have to sign a declaration saying that they accept the fact their grade may go down and they may get a lower grade than their original TAG.**

What's a priority appeal?

Priority appeals will be handled more quickly than other appeals, where possible before UCAS's advisory deadline of **8 September**. Priority appeals are only open to **A Level students starting university this autumn, who have missed out on the conditions of their firm or insurance offer**. If you decided not to confirm a firm conditional offer and to go through clearing instead, JCQ cannot offer you a priority appeal.

When making a priority appeal, students will have to include their UCAS number so it can be confirmed that it is a genuine priority appeal. JCQ cannot offer priority appeals for GCSE students, unfortunately.

What should I do if I don't get into my first choice of university?

Firstly, don't panic. We will support you through this. You can speak to our Sixth Form team on 10 August about your options. You may wish to go through clearing, or sit the autumn exams or summer exams next year to try to improve your grade.

If you are going to appeal your grade, you must let your university know you are appealing. They will then let you know whether they will hold a place for you pending the outcome of an appeal (note that universities are not obliged to hold a place for you; this is at their discretion).

What should I do before appealing?

Students must read the JCQ Student and Parent guide before appealing, which will be available on the JCQ website by results days. Students should also read the content of this letter thoroughly.

We may not be able to offer as much advice and guidance on the likely success of an appeal this summer as we would in normal years, as we have already moderated and quality assured all the grades ourselves.

What are the two stages of an appeal?

All appeals, on any of the grounds above, must first go through a **centre review**. At this stage, we will check for any administrative errors, and check that our policies and procedures were followed correctly. Our policy has already been approved by the exam boards, so we are only ensuring that this was followed.

If you want to appeal, the student must do this themselves and should follow these steps:

Stage 1 Centre Review:

- The student should **download the appeals forms** from our website: https://www.alderbrookschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/JCQ_Appeals-Guidance_Summer-2021_Appendix-B-final-version-for-website.pdf
- You should read the first page of this document thoroughly, then fill in the form: **Stage 1 - Centre Review Section A student request**. Leave the other pages on that document altogether so we keep all our communications with you in one place. You do not need to

supply any other information in the body of the email as we will be working from the forms only. Email the form to appeals21@alderbrook.solihull.sch.uk

- This must come from the student using their school email address. They can sign the document by typing their name.
- We will return the whole document, where you will find the Centre Review Outcome Section B of the form which will have been completed. At the centre review stage, if we find that a grade should go up or down, we will ask the exam board to change it. They will then consider this request. A grade can be lowered or raised as a result of a Centre Review. **Lowered grades cannot be adjusted back to their original.**

Stage 2 Awarding Organisation Appeal:

- The awarding organisation will not be able to consider an appeal that is based solely on a difference of opinion – if the student wants to improve their grade, they should consider entering the autumn exam series.
- Stage 2 can be applied for if the student believes there is still an error following the centre review, or if they consider that the grade awarded was an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement.
- If this is the case, the student must fill in the form on the same document, for **Stage 2 – appeal to the awarding organisation**, and send this to us. A reminder to keep the whole document as one – so the Stage 1 and centre review outcome part are on the first pages.
- We will then send the whole document on your behalf to the exam boards. Students cannot send appeals directly to the exam board themselves – it must come from us.
- The outcome of the awarding organisation appeal will be communicated to students when made. The outcome of this will be final. The result may be lower, the same or higher than the original grade.
- There is no further opportunity to appeal the outcome to the awarding organisation.
- Should the student still remain concerned that their grade was incorrect, they may be able to apply for a procedural review. The appeal outcome letter will include the next appropriate steps for this review to be conducted by the Exam Procedures Review Service.

What are the deadlines for priority appeals?

The deadline for requesting a priority appeal is **13 August**.

We will attempt to complete the centre review by **17 August***. If students wish to progress this to an awarding organisation appeal, they must send the completed form to us by **19 August** for priority appeals.

*At both stages of the appeals process, there may be the need for specialist, expert knowledge (e.g. subject teachers, SEND knowledge). This may not be possible in August. In such cases, we may have to wait until the start of term, but priority appeals will still be treated as a priority.

What are the deadlines for non-priority appeals?

Non-priority appeals are any A levels, GCSEs or vocational qualifications, where a firm or insurance university place is not pending.

The deadline for submitting a centre review is **3 September**; and the deadline for submitting an awarding organisation appeal should be done by the school deadline of **14 September**.

Appeals received after these dates may still be considered.

You know my grades. Why can't you tell us? What if you know we haven't met our university conditional offer?

Although students may have been given marks or grades on single pieces of evidence, we cannot disclose the final submitted TAG. During the external quality assurance process taking place in June or July, our submitted TAGs may be moved up or down (although this will always be done through human agency, not by an algorithm).

We only know what a student's conditional offer is if they have chosen to share that information with us. It has not formed part of our objective grading of students. Where we do know this information, we must not let students know their submitted TAGs, even if they haven't met the conditions of their offer.

The whole process is summarised on this document provided by JCQ:

https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/JCQ_Grading-Summary_Infographic.pdf

I hope you have found the information in this letter useful. If you do have any questions about this process, please contact us on: exams@alderbrook.solihull.sch.uk

On results day, there will be staff on hand to support you consider the next steps should you need it.

We wish you well over the coming weeks.

Yours faithfully



Ms Kate Read
Deputy Headteacher



Mr T Beveridge
Headteacher