

## Student Grades 2021 Overview

### Student Grades 2021

As you are all aware, the process for awarding grades to students completing their studies in the summer of 2021 is different this year. As a result of examinations being cancelled, qualifications will be awarded using Teacher Assessed Grades.

Since 5<sup>th</sup> January, and from the 8<sup>th</sup> of March onwards in particular, we have been mindful to provide you with regular updates (timed to be released when guidance was provided to us from JCQ/awarding bodies) to ensure you were aware of the process used to award your grades and to give you opportunity to have agency in how your grades have been determined.

We are mindful that over the months there have been a number of these updates and thus, as we begin to prepare for results day, we wanted to collate all information into one document to remind you of the key policy/procedure led actions we have taken and why.

We feel that this is important for you, in order that should you have any questions or queries, can contact us now on [TAGQueries@stbrn.ac.uk](mailto:TAGQueries@stbrn.ac.uk) and we can resolve/clarify anything ahead of results day. It will also help you to fully understand how your grades have been determined which should minimise any surprises on results day.

What did we do?	Why did we do this?
<p>Wrote the Centre Policy in line with JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) guidance.</p> <p>The link to the policy can be found by <a href="#">clicking here</a></p>	<p>This is a compulsory aspect of the grading process for the exam boards to confirm that the processes we have in place meet the guidelines.</p> <p>This policy, which was fully approved by the exam boards, lays out the framework and actions we commit to throughout the process of assigning grades.</p>
<p>In line with JCQ guidance, teachers used their academic judgement to select a range of</p>	<p>JCQ gave complete flexibility to each center to choose a range of suitable evidence on which to base a student's grade. The criterion</p>

Commented [SB1]: link?

<p>evidence that would be used for the basket of evidence.</p> <p>In all cases this included agreeing some Key Assessments to be taken between March and May that further bolstered the basket of evidence and ensured students were able to provide more evidence that supported the assigning of grades.</p>	<p>for selecting this evidence is set out on page 4 of the <a href="#">Guidance for Students and Parents</a></p> <p>You can also see more information on the guidance that we followed here: <a href="#">Government Publication</a></p>
<p>Our Quality Team checked the proposed basket of evidence to ensure it met JCQ guidelines.</p>	<p>This was a crucial step to confirm that the academic judgement of the teaching team was reasonable and to establish that all criteria for assessment selection had been met.</p>
<p>Communicated the basket of evidence to students.</p>	<p>Keeping students informed and giving students agency in this process has been integral to all we have endeavoured to achieve. Communicating the basket of evidence, aside from being required of us by policy, enabled students to discuss the basket of evidence with us and ensure we were aware of any mitigations/concerns.</p>
<p>Ensured the basket of evidence is available on Pro-Monitor for you to see the grades you achieved in each assessment.</p>	<p>Whilst you will have known your grades for each assessment already, we wanted to ensure complete transparency and that you know what has been used in the grading process.</p> <p>Sharing the marks and grades has also ensured that if anyone was unsure about a mark/grade for a particular assessment, you have been able to contact us on TAGqueries and we have been able to help you.</p> <p>This means that you are aware of the level of performance in each assessment. As we have communicated, the grade awarded is a holistic one.</p>

Ensured that all students had opportunity to let us know about any mitigating circumstances they wanted to tell us about.

This was an important aspect of the policy and process this year as Special Considerations that are usually applied during an exam season did not apply.

This window of opportunity ensured that students could make us aware of any mitigations and that we could review these first to see if they met JCQ Guidance on Special Consideration and, secondly, to ask teachers to take the mitigations into account and act in line with this year's [policy](#).

The panel consisted of our SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co Ordinator) & Head of Safeguarding (who also reviewed all safeguarding reports in case a student did not tell us of an issue themselves), Head of Student Services, Head of Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Quality Manager, Exams Officer and Vice Principal. This range of expertise ensured all aspects of the JCQ policy were followed and eliminated any risk of bias/discrimination or inconsistency in approach. It also ensured we took the pressure of teachers having to make complex decisions so that their judgements were not affected by any emotional attachment to the students' circumstances.

Where mitigating circumstances did apply, we communicated with students to update them on their basket of evidence. Changes were only made if performance in an assessment was 'significantly, adversely and demonstrably' affected by the mitigating circumstance. If this was not the case, then the basket stayed the same.

This was in line with the [policy](#) set before us.

We communicated to all students who had requested mitigating circumstances, and any resulting impact on their basket, to ensure students had opportunity to ask any further questions and/or provide

	<p>any further evidence. Again, this ensured our students had agency in how their grades have been awarded.</p>
<p><b>During assessment:</b> Ensured that all agreed Exam Access Arrangements were in place.</p>	<p>In the final 3 Key Assessments and during any cross-college Key Assessments e.g., Jan Progress Exam all students had their EAA (Exam Access Arrangements) needs in place. Not only is this a procedural requirement, but it is also something we commit to ensuring is in place for all our students.</p> <p>We noted, when quality checking the baskets, there were some assessments, in some courses, for an exceedingly small number of students, where EAA were not in place.</p> <p>In these exceedingly rare circumstances, the teachers have ensured they mitigated the performance and, if assessment was significantly and adversely affected, teachers will have taken this into account when assigning your holistic grade. This is important to ensure no student has been inadvertently disadvantaged.</p>
<p><b>After assessment:</b> Moderation of work to ensure consistency of marking and application of grade boundaries.</p>	<p>As per our assessment policy, we recognise the importance of our teaching teams working together to monitor and review each other's marking to ensure all are treated equally.</p> <p>This in turn reassures students that all assessments have been sampled and have been marked consistently across different classes.</p> <p>In some courses, especially those where there is only one teacher on the course, we worked with colleagues in other centers who moderated some of the assessments for us. In all cases our teachers' marks were agreed with. This gives us, and you, the assurance that the marks and grades awarded are in line with awarding body expectations.</p>
<p><b>Assigning of grades:</b></p>	

<p>Ensure all staff complete mandatory reading and training.</p>	<p>This ensured all teachers had up to date knowledge of the process and understood the methodology to be used for assigning the grades, in turn ensuring consistency.</p>
<p>Ensured all team members were present.</p>	<p>This ensured a collaborative and consistent decision-making process, ensuring that no one teacher decided on their own.</p>
<p>Initially removed all student names/numbers, then revealed them for confirmation checking.</p>	<p>This was an important first step to eliminate any risk of bias/discrimination. Making decisions based on the evidence alone, in the first instance, provided a good starting point. Names were then revealed for teachers to work through student by student to confirm the evidence and grade assigned.</p>
<p>Ensure the Head of Department was always present.</p>	<p>The Head of Department ensured that all quality steps were followed, managed the process of grade assigning, ensured the teachers always referred to the grade descriptors and evidence alone and that any special considerations were taken in to account fairly and in line with policy.</p>
<p>Used the Awarding Body Grade Descriptors provided to support in the assigning of the Teacher Assessed Grades.</p>	<p>This was a key requirement set before us and ensured that the grades assigned are consistent and fair. Importantly, it provides a justification of the grade awarded and ensures that grades are commensurate with the level the student has performed at, not a prediction of what they could have achieved in an exam.</p>

<p>Recorded the decisions on the assessment record form.</p> <p>Randomly assigned Quality checking across all faculties</p>	<p>Again, a key requirement of the policy but also essential for later quality (internal and external) stages.</p> <p>A senior member of the quality team 'dropped in' on a variety of the meetings unannounced to ensure all administration and procedural activity was compliant with policy.</p>
<p><b>After the assigning of grades:</b></p> <p>The Head of Department attended a series of internal quality meetings with senior members of the quality team.</p> <p>Further quality checks by different member of quality team to review application of special consideration/EAA and sampling of course records.</p> <p>High level comparison of subject, qualification and College performance compared to the last three years.</p>	<p>The quality team were able to review the grades with a fresh set of eyes and ensure that the procedure had been followed along the way.</p> <p>Rationale for each grade was provided to ensure the grades assigned are commensurate with the level the student is performing at and in line with the awarding body grade descriptors.</p> <p>This ensured the quality team above were held to account and that any administration/procedural issues were identified and addressed early.</p> <p>This was a requirement of the policy and important for us as a center to understand difference compared to 2017-19. These checks resulted in 0 (zero) changes to Teacher Assessed Grades.</p>

<p>Additional narrative to justify differences compared to three-year average prepared for external quality assurance.</p> <p>Head of Centre, the Principal, met with each Head of Department and Vice Principal to complete final quality check and sign off.</p>	<p>The narrative is a vital component of discussions with the awarding body responsible for quality assuring us.</p> <p>We are confident that the grades awarded to our students are commensurate with the level they have been performing at, and that our processes followed to get us there, are secure.</p> <p>Should we be asked to explain our grades we need to ensure we have the justification in place.</p> <p>A further, and essential, component of the policy. As Head of Centre, the principal has overall responsibility of confirming to the awarding bodies and JCQ that the grades submitted are commensurate with the level the students are performing at AND that all required administration and procedural steps have been followed.</p>
<p><b>Submission of grades:</b></p> <p>Exam's officer submitted all grades to the portals provided by the awarding bodies.</p> <p>Quality check of submission by Head of MIS</p>	<p>This ensured the grades were entered correctly and in line with the grades held centrally with no risk of alternative grades being entered.</p> <p>This vital stage was the first of many administration checks to ensure no errors between our assessment records and the grades submitted.</p>

<p>Further quality check for administration error by Quality Manager</p>	<p>A further, electronic, check completed to eliminate the risk of human error in the quality checking process.</p> <p>Any issues identified would have been rectified prior to submission to the awarding body.</p> <p>No issues in these initial stages were found.</p>
<p><b>External Quality Assurance</b></p> <p>At the point of writing 6x courses have been selected for enhanced external quality assurance. These courses are selected at random, and we expect more checks to come between now and results day.</p>	<p>This is an important procedural aspect of the grading process for summer 2021 and ensures the grades awarded, and process undertaken, is compliant with national standards.</p> <p>As a center we have supported this process, and have actively engaged with our awarding bodies to ensure our students can have every confidence in the accuracy of grades awarded on results day.</p>

## Results Day & Appeals

### How will I receive my results?

Whilst we are working on the planning and logistics for Results Day itself, which will be communicated later when we are clearer on Covid risks and associated actions, we wanted to advise you of the information we do know with regards to how you will be able to access your results on the 10th August (A-Levels/Level 3) and 12th August (GCSE/Level 2).

Your results will be available from **8.30am** on the morning of your results day via your Student Portal (this is different to Pro-Monitor so you must read the instructions via the link below). The information on the screen will be just the result itself.



We will also be producing more detailed results information that will be printed on paper and able to collect on results day. This information will include a summary of the basket of evidence used, the grade descriptor (as provided by the awarding body) and any specific individual information, as necessary.

Again, details for how and when to come to College to collect this information will be shared in due course when we are clearer on the Covid roadmap. If this more detailed information is not collected on the day, it will be posted to you.

Below is a link to a document which details the instructions for accessing your results on the day. Please ensure you download and save them, so you have them ready for results day.

Click [HERE](#) for logon instructions for Exam Results 2021

### **You know my grades already, why can't you just tell us?**

We are forbidden from disclosing Teacher Assessed Grades to any third party, including students and parents/carers, until results days. Any teacher or member of staff who does this is committing exam malpractice.

Although students have been given the marks and grades from each assessment in the basket, we cannot disclose the final submitted TAG.

During the external quality assurance process taking place in June and July, our submitted TAGs may be moved up or down (although this will always be done through human agency, not an algorithm).

We know many students have HE and/or Apprenticeship offers that are conditional based on your results and would like to be reassured before the day or begin planning alternative options. It is important to remember that we only know a student's conditional offer if they have chosen to share that information with us. It has not formed part of our objective grading of students. Even where we do know this information, we still must not let students know their TAGs.

### **What if I have a question or need help on the day?**

A range of support services will be available for you on results day, and we will also have a mechanism for you to raise queries via an MS Form which will be picked up by our TAG Queries team.

You can email [TAGQueries@stbrn.ac.uk](mailto:TAGQueries@stbrn.ac.uk) where a copy of the MS Form link will be sent to you.

Members of our careers and pastoral team will be on site, times to be advised, to support with things such as UCAS should this be needed.

We will also have at least two members of the College Leadership Team available at College who will be able to answer initial queries and/or support students in where to direct queries.

Our exams officer will also be on site so that those wishing to register to sit the Autumn exams can collect the necessary paperwork.

If you have questions about your grades in a certain subject, we ask you to please not email your teachers. All teachers have been instructed on the process to be followed in the event of student contacting them, which includes not answering any queries themselves. As part of the process, to ensure that our procedure and policy is followed correctly, all queries will be handled centrally and we will communicate with the teachers for more information, if needed, when they return from the summer break.

### **What do I do if I am not happy with my grade?**

It is acknowledged that in some cases, students will be disappointed with the grade they have been assigned and will feel they could have done better in an exam situation and/or in different circumstances.

As has already been communicated, the grading process this year required teachers to assign grades based on the evidence they had in front of them that was submitted by you. The grade is not a prediction of what you could have achieved, simply one that the evidence in your basket shows you are working at when compared to the awarding body grade descriptors. You have had an opportunity to tell us about any mitigating circumstances and, where these circumstances met JCQ guidance, they have been taken into consideration.

Therefore, we will first ask you to look at and **read through all the information** you have had via the bulletin and TAG Queries, and why we have summarised all the steps we have gone through along the way, at the start of this information pack.

**There is the option to sit your GCSEs/A-Levels in the autumn term and this will be the option many of you who believed you could have done better under different circumstances will take. Our Exams Officer will be present on results day, and after via email, to support you with booking in for the autumn exams.**

### What should I do if I don't get in to my first-choice university?

First, don't panic. Come into College and speak with our careers team who will be on hand to support you. They will talk to you about all other options such as accepting your insurance choice, going through clearing, sitting the autumn exams next year to try and improve your grade.

If you are going to appeal your grade, see details on the appeals process below. 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 the universities are **not obliged** to hold a place for you; this is at their discretion).

### What do I do if I believe the grade is wrong?

If, having read through all of the information, you believe there is an error in the grade you have been awarded then there is an option to appeal the grade **if** you meet the eligibility criteria (see below).

It is important to note that an appeal may result in a grade being lowered, staying the same or going up. This is important for you to know as if you put in an appeal and the grade is lowered, you will receive the lower mark with no opportunity to change this.

### 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 may have made an **administrative error**: an example of this would be putting the wrong information on to your mark book or the spreadsheet.
- You think we have made a **procedural error**: this means you believe we haven't properly followed our own process (as set out in the Centre Policy, flow chart and detailed above) and as approved by the exam board. An example of this would be where you've been told, and have evidence from our Access Arrangements Coordinator, you should have received extra time in your assessments, but this wasn't given in a certain subject, and you are unclear whether consideration was made. *Please see above information on how we took EAA into account for smaller in class assessments.*

- You think the **academic judgment on the selection of evidence was unreasonable**: you think the evidence used to grade you was not reasonable. *Please see information above on how evidence was selected and the quality assurance process this went through.*
- You think the **academic judgement on the grade you were given was unreasonable**.

Students should note that 're-marks' or 'reviews of marking' are not applicable this year.

### 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.

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 get a lower grade than their original TAG.

### 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 we followed this properly.

The outcome of the centre review will be communicated to students when made.

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.

Following the outcome of a centre review, students may still choose to pursue an **awarding organisation appeal**. They must fill in a form, which will be provided, which we will then send on their behalf to the exam boards. Students and parents/carers cannot send appeals directly to the exam board themselves – it must come from us, and we must process it.

The outcome of the awarding organisation appeal will be communicated to students when made.

### 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 and will be sent via TAGQueries with the link to our MS Form.

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.

### How do I make an appeal?

On results day, students will be sent a link to an MS form (to register both general queries and/or appeal requests). Those requesting to make an appeal will be sent the relevant paperwork they must complete, sign and return.

### What is a priority appeal?

Priority appeals will be handled more quickly than other appeals and where possible before UCAS's advisory deadline of 8 September.

Priority appeals are only open to **A level, or other Level 3 alternative, students starting university this autumn, who have missed out on the conditions of their firm offer I.E. the offer they accepted as their first choice.**

If you decided not to confirm a firm conditional offer and to go through clearing instead, JCQ cannot offer you a priority appeal.

Unfortunately, JCQ cannot offer priority appeals to GCSE students.

When making a priority appeal, students will have to include their UCAS number so that it can be confirmed that it is a genuine priority appeal.

### **What are the deadlines for a priority appeal?**

The suggested deadline for requesting a priority appeal is 16 August (students cannot appeal before results day on 10/12 August).

We will attempt to complete the centre review by 20 August\*. If students wish to progress this to an awarding organisation appeal, they must send the completed form to us by 22 August for priority appeals.

\*At both stages of the appeals process, there may be a need for specialist, expert knowledge (e.g. subject teachers, SEND knowledge). This may not be possible in August as many of our staff will be on holiday and do not return until 25 August. In such cases we may have to wait until the start of term, but priority appeals will still be treated as priority.

### **What are the deadlines for a non-priority appeal?**

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 is 10 September.

Appeals after these dates may still be considered but the timescales for reply will be longer.