



NORTON COLLEGE

Beyond Expectations

Our Ref: SST/JJA

12th July 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

In March and May I wrote to you to explain that the Government had confirmed that exams would not take place in summer 2021. In this letter I also outlined how Norton College would assess students in 2021 and the steps that we would take to ensure that all students' grades were determined in a way that was fair, transparent and robust.

We remain confident that our assessment and quality assurance systems have ensured that all students receive a fair grade that recognises the level they were working at in each of their subjects. However, as you will be aware, students are able to appeal their grade(s) if they decide that they would like to. In the rest of this letter, I have outlined the way in which the appeals process will operate for qualifications awarded in the summer series of 2021. In addition, we have used this letter to share responses to a selection of frequently asked questions, and we hope that these will address any questions that you may have. In the next few weeks, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) intend to publish a *Student and Parent Guide to Appeals* and this will be a helpful resource to support you to understand the appeals process in more detail. We will share with you a link to this document as soon as it becomes available.

How were my / my child's 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 an holistic assessment of students' performance in a subject, following a rigorous process of assessment, moderation and quality assurance. These grades were then approved by the relevant exam board, following external quality assurance checks. In some cases, the TAGs we submitted may have been reviewed by the exam board, who may have asked us to submit an alternative grade. However, any changes to the grades we submitted were done by professional teachers or reviewers; this year no grades have been changed as a result of an algorithm.

What do I do if I am not happy with my / my child's grade?

All students have the opportunity to appeal their grade if they 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. If a student puts in an appeal and their grade is lowered, they will receive the lower mark/grade.

There is also the option to resit GCSEs, A levels and some AS levels in the autumn, which may be preferable to some students. The design, content and assessment of these papers will be the same as in a normal year.

What are the grounds for appeal?

There are five 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 have not properly followed our own process, as approved by the exam board. An example of this would be where you have been told you should have received extra time for assessments but this was not given in a certain subject.
- You think the **academic judgement on the selection of evidence was unreasonable**: 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 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. Due to 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 confirming that they understand that their grade may go down and they may get a lower grade than their original TAG.

What is a priority appeal?

Priority appeals will be handled more quickly than other appeals, where possible before UCAS' 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. JCQ cannot offer priority appeals for GCSE students, unfortunately. 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.

What should I do if I do not get into my first choice of university?

Please speak to us 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. We will 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 we followed this properly. The outcome of the centre review will be communicated to students. 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 complete the required paperwork which we will then send on their behalf to the exam boards. Students and parents 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.

How do I make an appeal?

Following results days, students should fill in the first section (Section A **only**) of the JCQ form [here](#) and drop this off at (or post to) the college's main reception team, marked urgent and **for the attention of Examinations (Appeals)**.

What are the deadlines for priority appeals?

The suggested deadline for requesting a priority appeal is 16 August (students cannot appeal before results day on 10 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 23 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 the new academic term in September, 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 is 10 September. Appeals received after these dates may still be considered.

You know my / my child's grades. Why can't you tell us? What if you know we have not met our university conditional offer?

We are forbidden from disclosing the Teacher Assessed Grades to any third party, including students and parents, until results days. Any teacher or member of staff who does this is committing exam malpractice. 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 and 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 have not met the conditions of their offer.

Year 13: Release of Results/Results Day

Results for A levels and other Level 3 (A level equivalent) courses will be released to students on Tuesday 10 August 2021. **Sixth Form students will be able to collect these results from the Sixth Form centre between 9am and 11am on Tuesday 10 August 2021.** Results will be posted to students if they have not been collected by 11am. We will share further information with you in the future about the final plans for results day. **Please note that these plans will be subject to change in line with the public health guidance in place at that time.**

Year 11: Release of Results/Results Day

Results for GCSEs and other Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) courses will be released to students on Thursday 12 August 2021. **Year 11 students will be able to collect these results from the Sixth Form centre between 9am and 11am on Thursday 12 August 2021.** Results will be posted to students if they have not been collected by 11am. We will share further information with you in the future about the final plans for results day. **Please note that these plans will be subject to change in line with the public health guidance in place at that time.**

We hope that this information is helpful and that it has addressed any questions that you may have had about the appeals process for students receiving qualifications in summer 2021. If you do have further queries or questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully



Mr S Stones
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