

Exam appeals guidance released

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) this week published the appeals guidance for grades awarded this summer.

11 June 2021

Please note: the information contained in this legal update is correct as of the original date of publication.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) this week published the appeals guidance for grades awarded this summer. We will shortly be releasing further information on the appeals process and data protection considerations, as well as running a [webinar](#) on 7 July, but in advance of that, here are three key points to take away from the guidance.

Firstly, there are two stages to the appeals process. The stage one centre review is about checking that your centre's procedures in arriving at the grade have been followed and that no administrative errors have occurred during the process (e.g. between two students with similar names). The second stage is where students who are still unhappy following the outcome of the stage one centre review, can request that the centre submits their appeal to the awarding organisation. It's at this second stage that the awarding body will consider appeal arguments around academic judgement and mitigating circumstances.

Secondly, the timescales are tight. There is a deadline for students applying to higher education, who did not attain their first choice, of 16 August to make a centre review request and 23 August for a stage two (awarding organisation appeal) request to centres. There is more time for non-priority appeals with deadlines of 3 September and 17 September respectively for students. This does mean that centres are going to need to ensure their processes are robust and records are kept of students that are requesting reviews to ensure none are missed.

Finally, on stage two appeals that relate to the exercise of academic judgement, which can either be in the form of the evidence selected or the decision on the grade itself, the question for the awarding body will be whether the decision was unreasonable, not whether another proposed grade in the appeal was reasonable. This is a relatively high threshold and does mean that appeals on this basis will be difficult, albeit not impossible, for students to succeed on.

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