Dear parents/students,

**Exam results appeals – GCSEs and A-levels 2021**

As you are aware, GCSE and A-level grades this summer were based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). TAGs were submitted to exam boards by us and provide an overall assessment of students’ performance in a subject.

Students will receive their results in August (10th August – A-level and 12th August – GCSE). There is a chance that some students might feel that the grade has been awarded unfairly or that an error has been made; all students have the opportunity to appeal their grade where appropriate. We are now in a position to explain the process for how to appeal GCSE and A-level grades. Please read this letter very carefully, it is quite long but does explain exactly what to do if you want to appeal.

**How were the students’ grades arrived at this year?**

TAG grades were set following a rigorous process of assessment, moderation and quality assurance within Thomas Deacon Academy and across Thomas Deacon Education Trust. These grades will have been approved by the exam boards who sampled work to check that we followed procedures and ensure that we set grades that were a ‘reasonable’ professional academic judgement of student performance.

**What if students feel their grade has been awarded unfairly or an error has been made?**

A student should only appeal their grade if they meet the eligibility criteria 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 grade. **Only a student is entitled to appeal, parents cannot appeal on their child’s behalf.**

There is also the option to sit GCSEs, A levels and some AS levels examinations in the autumn, which is likely to be better for most 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 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. An example of this would be where you’ve been told you should have received extra time for assessments but this wasn’t 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 and means that no educational professional (e.g. teacher) acting reasonably could have selected the same evidence or come up with the same grade. An unreasonable judgement would be one that is far away from what might be expected.

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. Comparison with other schools does not give you the right to appeal.

It also means that the independent reviewers (conducting the appeal) 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, **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 is 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 a student decided not to confirm a firm conditional offer and to go through clearing instead, JCQ cannot offer a priority appeal. JCQ cannot offer priority appeals for GCSE students.

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 if students don’t get into their first choice of university?**

First, don’t panic. Students should speak to Mrs Jackson about their options. Students may wish to go through clearing, or sit the autumn exams or summer exams next year to try to improve their 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 (and our website) by results days.

Any student who thinks they might want to appeal must also make an appointment to speak to a member of staff at school – appointments must be booked via the online form available on the [TAG section of the academy website](https://www.thomasdeaconacademy.com/page/?title=Teacher+Assessed+Grades+%28TAG%29+2020%2D21&pid=523).

**What are the two stages of an appeal?**

All appeals 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 once agreed.

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 then complete the bottom half of the centre review form, which we will then send on their 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 once agreed.

**How do I make an appeal?**

Following results days, students should make an appointment to speak to a member of staff by following the booking link on the website. **The student** should then fill in the first section of the JCQ form [here](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/JCQ_Appeals-Guidance_Summer-2021_Appendix-B.pdf) and send it to [appeals@tda.com](mailto:appeals@tda.com).

**Appeals must be sent from the student’s school e-mail and must be written by the student themselves. Appeals sent from personal e-mails will be returned.**

If a student needs support with electronic submission of appeals, they should speak to the member of staff with whom they met after results day.

**What are the deadlines for appeals?**

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

We will attempt to complete the centre review by 20th August\*. If students wish to progress this to an awarding organisation appeal, they must send the completed form to us by **23rd August** for priority appeals.

Non-priority appeals are any other appeals for A levels, GCSEs or vocational qualifications. The deadline for submitting a centre review is **3rd September**; and the deadline for submitting an awarding organisation appeal is **10th September**.

\*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.

**You know my/ my child’s grades. Why can’t you tell us? What if you know we haven’t met our university conditional offer?**

We are forbidden from disclosing the Teacher Assessed Grades including to 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 (this will always be by a teacher or professional reviewer – not an algorithm).

Any university place offers have not been used to form 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.

We know that this is a very stressful time for all students and waiting for exam results is never easy. The appeals process can appear complicated but we are confident that few students will actually want to appeal. There is a flow-chart below, that shows the whole process. If you have any concerns prior to results days, please contact Mr Ladak on [mla@tda.education](mailto:mla@tda.education). We want to wish you all the best for your results in the summer and the very best wishes for whatever your future holds.

Best wishes,

Mohammed Ladak Michala Jackson

Assistant Principal Head of 6th Form

GCSE Results Appeals Process

**12th August 2021: GCSE Results Day**

* You will receive your GCSE results.
* You will also receive confirmation of your post-16 place (if applicable)

**Appointment with member of staff – leading to appeal**

* If you are not happy with your results and think you might want to appeal, you must make an appointment to speak to a member of staff using [this link](https://www.thomasdeaconacademy.com/page/?title=Teacher+Assessed+Grades+%28TAG%29+2020%2D21&pid=523).
* You must also read the JCQ Student and Parent Guide to appeals (found on the JCQ website or our website).

**Stage 1: Centre Review**

* The first stage of an appeal is a **Centre Review**
* Complete the appeal form that you find on the website and send it to appeals@tda.com
* Only students can apply for a Centre Review or Awarding Organisation review and we will only accept forms via school e-mail addresses
* We will not accept appeals that are sent to any other addresses and will only accept appeal forms via e-mail
* If you need support to complete the form please speak to a member of staff
* Appeal request forms need to be received by the school by **3rd September**

**Centre review outcome**

* We will send you the results of the centre review
* We will attempt to complete this by 6th September
* If you are not happy with this decision then you can submit an **Awarding Organisation review**

**Stage 2: Awarding Organisation Review**

* You must complete a centre review before applying for an awarding organisation review
* You will need to apply for this review using the same form (which will be returned to you) as you did for the centre review (there is a section under the centre review)
* A request for an awarding organisation review must be received within 5 days of you receiving the results of a centre review
* The deadline for awarding organisation review applications is **10th September 2021**

**Final outcome**

* The outcome of your appeal will determine your grade. If your grade goes down on appeal, this will be the grade that stands.
* If your grade goes up on appeal, this will be reflected in your certificate.
* You will be informed of any grade changes.

A-level Results Appeals Process

**10th August 2021: A-level/L3 VTQ Results Day**

* You will receive your A-level or VTQ L3 results.
* You will also receive confirmation of your university place (if applicable)
* If you have not met your university offer and want to appeal, you will qualify for a priority appeal. (Please note, universities do not have to hold your place in the case of you appealing.)
* If you want to appeal regardless of university entry you do not qualify for a priority appeal

**Appointment with member of staff – leading to appeal**

* If you are not happy with your results and think you might want to appeal, you must make an appointment to speak to a member of staff using [this link](https://www.thomasdeaconacademy.com/page/?title=Teacher+Assessed+Grades+%28TAG%29+2020%2D21&pid=523).
* You must also read the JCQ Student and Parent Guide to appeals (found on the JCQ website or our website).

**Stage 1: Centre Review**

* The first stage of an appeal is a **Centre Review**
* Complete the appeal form that you find on the website and send it to appeals@tda.com
* We will not accept appeals that are sent to any other addresses and will only accept appeal forms via e-mail
* If you need support to complete the form please speak to a member of staff
* Priority appeals need to be received by the school by 16th August
* Other appeals need to be received by the school by 3rd September

**Centre review outcome**

* We will send you the results of the centre review
* If you have a put in a priority appeal we will attempt to complete this by 20th August\* (if we need specialist expert knowledge, this might not be possible)
* For other appeals we will attempt to complete this by 6th September
* If you are not happy with this decision then you can submit a request for an **Awarding Organisation review**

**Stage 2: Awarding Organisation Review**

* You must complete a centre review before applying for an awarding organisation review
* You will need to apply for this review using the same form (which will be returned to you) as you did for the centre review (there is a section under the centre review)
* A request for an awarding organisation review must be received within 3 days (for priority appeals) or within 5 days (other appeals) of you receiving the results of a centre review
* The deadline for priority appeals is **23rd August 2021**
* The deadline for other appeals is 10th September 2021

**Final outcome**

* The outcome of your appeal will determine your grade. If your grade goes down on appeal, this will be the grade that stands.
* If your grade goes up on appeal, this will be reflected in your certificate.
* You will be informed of any grade changes.