

By email

21 April 2020

Dear Chris

Many thanks for your letter on behalf of Heads in the GwE, which raises several matters in relation to Summer 2020 awards and also the issue of the impact on to next academic year for those learners currently in Years 10 and 12.

Let me start with this summer before moving on to next.

Firstly, I have been clear in the briefings that I gave to the Headteachers Reference Group and to Regional Consortia that we are not applying a comparable outcome approach this year, that is adhering to strict predicted outcomes. Indeed, there are many misconceptions about the role that the comparable outcomes approach plays in normal years, but now is not the time to dwell on that.

We do, however, expect that results will be 'broadly similar' this year to previous years. This is in the interest of fairness. It would be unfair for this year's cohort to be advantaged or disadvantaged relative to previous or future cohorts because of this year's exceptional and unprecedented circumstances, which are the consequence of a national public health emergency.

Results at a national cohort level are relatively stable over time, so we expect that they will remain 'broadly similar' this year. By broadly similar we expect that results at a national cohort will be sufficiently close to previous years for the results to be plausible within the education sector and wider society. There is no fixed margin of tolerance over previous years, but we do need to ensure that the unusual basis for awards this summer does not inflate outcomes artificially or unfairly.

The standardisation model will be designed by WJEC and agreed by us so that there can be confidence that schools and colleges are applying a similar standard when generating Centre Assessment Grades. This is essential as individual schools and colleges may be relatively harsh or lenient, in which case it may be necessary for the Centre Assessment Grades to be adjusted in the award of the final calculated grade.

Qualifications Wales

Q2 Building, Pencarn Lane
Imperial Park,
Newport
NP10 8AR
☎ 01633 373 222



Cymwysterau Cymru

Adeilad Q2, Lôn Pencarn
Parc Imperial,
Casnewydd
NP10 8AR
☎ 01633 373 222

We hope that this process will not need to make significant adjustments, and that all schools and colleges provide accurate Centre Assessment Grades, that is the grade most likely to be achieved by each candidate in each subject had they sat the examination. However, the process of standardisation is needed to ensure fairness to all.

The model for standardisation is currently being designed by WJEC, working alongside other GQ awarding bodies in England to ensure similarity across nations.

We expect that several models will be trialled with previous years and live data once this is available before the final model is agreed. Therefore, we do not expect the model to be finalised and agreed until the end of June or early July, once data has been submitted by schools and the various models checked with this data. Details of the model will be published at this point. We are also considering providing some information about the 'fit' of Centre Assessment Grades to predictions at the same time, so that there is public understanding of the degree of change that the standardisation model is likely to have to make.

We are currently working on details of the appeals process and will be consulting on this soon – we plan to launch a consultation that will run for two weeks from 28 April that will cover the aims that will underpin the award of grades this summer and the appeals process. We expect that the appeals process will be very similar to that currently being consulted on by Ofqual. We and Welsh Government are aware of the concerns that you have raised about exposure to the appeals process should Centre Assessment Grades and rank order be subject to individual subject access data requests. I cannot say more at the moment, but governments across the UK are investigating options that could put in place to protect schools post-results. You will see more about the proposals for appeals in the consultation.

Returning to your first point about the impact on current Year 10 and 12 learners. Work has started to look at the impact on next summer's examinations and clearly there are many unknowns, so multiple scenarios will need to be developed. We are currently working with WJEC to agreed principles that will underpin a subject by subject analysis of the options for change. These are likely to relate to the assessment model for next year. For example, recognising the significant time required for non-examination assessment, such as fieldwork or oral assessments, it is possible that revised arrangements will be put in place for these aspects of next year's examinations. I know that there is some call for a restricted syllabus for next year, reducing the content that needs to be delivered. Whilst not ruling this out at this early point, this seems less viable as schools and colleges will all deliver their local curriculum in slightly different ways, so there is no set order for content delivery and therefore no obvious way to make a change without there being significant disadvantage for some.

This is all early work as the priority has obviously been to establish arrangements for this summer. More information will come from WJEC as it is available and, in the meantime, we have asked Regional Consortia to help us identify a sense of priority by subject.

I am sorry that I have not been able to provide more direct answers to some of your questions, but please be assured that more information will be published as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Philip Blaker', is centered below the closing. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Philip Blaker