



Hardenhuish School – A level results

Frequently Asked Questions (updated 24 August)

Please contact Dr Bassford (rpb@hardenhuish.wilts.sch.uk) or Mrs Vaughan (elv@hardenhuish.wilts.sch.uk) if you have any further questions which may be then be added to the version of this document available on the school website. This document will also be updated as and when further information is published from the DfE, Ofqual and JCQ.

1. What does the government U turn announced on Monday 17 August mean for the final grades awarded to students?

Students will now be awarded the centre assessment grades that schools submitted to the exam board back in May, or the standardised grades (those awarded by the exam boards on results day) if they are higher.

2. What is meant by a centre assessment grade?

Centre assessment grades (CAGs) are the grades which were submitted to exam boards (sometimes referred to as awarding bodies) by schools to reflect the most likely grades they thought candidates would have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-exam assessment. It is also important to understand that the CAGs submitted to exam boards had to be in line with the progress and attainment history over the last three years in a subject in an individual school (see below for more detail about this).

3. What is meant by rank orders?

Along with centre assessed grades, schools also had to submit to the exam boards a rank order of students within each grade in each subject. For example, if there were 15 students for GCSE maths who are given a centre assessment grade of 5, they were ranked from 1 to 15, where 1 is the most secure/highest attaining within that grade, 2 is the next most secure and so on. This was to help exam boards to moderate centre assessment grades across schools i.e. decide which grades should move up or down as necessary if a school's grades were too harsh or generous. Now that the standardisation or statistical model used by Ofqual has been invalidated, rank orders don't have any use or purpose.

4. How did the school decide my centre assessment grades?

Hardenhuish School followed a very rigorous and carefully planned process to decide centre assessment grades (CAGs), in accordance with guidelines from the Department for Education, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and advice from the exam boards. A range of information was used by teachers including mock exam results, performance in other assessments (including work in any non-exam assessment), class and homework as well as a teacher's holistic knowledge of each student and their overall professional judgement. The school governors met to formally approve the process before teachers started to derive CAGs. It is important to stress that while each student's teachers helped to produce the CAGs, a number of other staff, including Curriculum Leaders and the Leadership Team, were also involved in the internal moderation of these grades. This is why the grades are called centre rather than teacher assessment grades. In order to halt grade inflation and maintain national standards across schools and between years, Ofqual instructed schools that the set of CAGs which they submitted to the exam boards had to be in line with the average progress that students make in a subject at a particular school over the last three years. Further details can be found in a document called *Hardenhuish School: Summary of Process for Centre Assessment Grades Summer 2020* which is available on the school website.

5. Why might my centre assessment grades be lower than the expected grades that were on my last progress report in March?

This takes a bit of explaining so please read carefully. There are some national policy, whole school and subject specific reasons for these discrepancies which may help to explain.

The term 'centre assessment grade' is commonly defined as the most likely grade that a student would achieve if the summer exams had taken place. However, this definition only tells half the story. The national policy and instruction from Ofqual was that the CAGs submitted by schools had to be in line with the progress made by the last three cohorts of students in a subject at an individual school. So in reality, even if the students in a particular subject were all on track for achieving a brilliant set of grades equal to or above their targets, the school could not submit these as the CAGs if they were not in line with the results over the last 3 years. That is not to say that students have performed badly at Hardenhuish Sixth Form in recent years, in fact we have a very healthy progress record, but we still had to submit a set of grades which weren't more generous in terms of the progress they reflect than previous years. If we submitted a best case scenario for every student, and this was the natural instinct of every teacher, then our grades as a centre would have been greatly inflated. Not only would this have contravened Ofqual's instruction but it would have been morally and ethically wrong because school's across the country had a responsibility to help maintain consistent standards between schools and between year groups. The fact that very few of the CAGs across all subjects in the sixth

form were uplifted by the standardisation model shows that overall the set of CAGs we submitted were not harshly graded. Of course, the ironic thing is Ofqual's statistical approach to standardisation has now been invalidated, but unfortunately the legacy of this approach is still reflected in the CAGs which have now been awarded to students. This is because schools like Hardenhuish did their best, in good faith, to submit a set of grades back in May that would be in line with the national approach. When teachers decided the expected grades after the Y13 mocks, we knew nothing about what was to come and that the summer exams would be cancelled. It was not possible to simply use these expected grades as CAGs because they might not necessarily have been in line with the three year progress history in that subject.

At a whole school level, it is quite common for there to be discrepancies between expected grades given to students after their Y13 mocks and their final grades. Part of this is because predicting a student's performance is not a precise science but it is also because the school gives teachers some licence to use the progress reports to influence a student's attitude to learning. For example, setting a slightly higher aspirational expected grade can help to boost confidence and motivation, especially for hard working students that may be a bit demoralised by a poor mock performance. Setting a lower expected grade can sometimes be used as an important wakeup call, perhaps for complacent students that need to start working harder. This means that the expected grades on progress reports might not always be the most likely grade that a student would achieve in the summer exams. We appreciate that this can be misleading, particularly in the situation this year, but the intention is well meaning. We apologise if this aspect of our reporting gave students false hope of the most likely grade they would achieve in the summer.

Finally, there may be some reasons relating specifically to an individual student and their performance in individual subjects. These can't be listed here but if a student would like an explanation of their CAG in a particular subject then please e-mail Dr Bassford and he will liaise with staff to provide this information.

6. Why might my centre assessment grades be lower than my UCAS predictions?

UCAS predictions are made in the first term of Year 13 and are normally a best-case scenario to widen the range of universities that a student could potentially apply to. We explain this to students and stress the importance of an insurance choice with lower entry grades. Centre assessment grades (CAGs) are the most likely grade a student would achieve in the summer exams (see above) and were decided in May based on a range of assessment evidence, predominantly information from Year 13 which was not available when UCAS predictions were made. The same reasons given in question 5 may also help to explain why CAGs could be different to UCAS predictions.

7. Who can help me from school if I've still got concerns about my centre assessment grades?

We are here to help and should be your first port of call if you have any questions or concerns about your results. Dr Bassford is acting as gate keeper for queries about centre assessment grades, so please e-mail him. We would recommend you do this first before submitting an appeal.

8. Can I appeal my centre assessment grades?

Ofqual has now updated its guidance about appeals and has withdrawn previous information. Please click on this [link](#) to read the new guidance in full. This publication confirms what we thought would be the case:

- Schools can only appeal on a student's behalf if there has been an administrative error with the centre assessment grade (CAG) or rank order information. Administrative errors might include, for example, mixing up 2 students with similar names, or accidentally copying across the wrong data, but do not relate to the professional judgements of centres in assigning CAGs.
- Schools cannot appeal against the CAG that they decided was correct at the point of submitting it to the exam board.
- The decision to issue students the higher of their CAG or their calculated grades means that a route to appeal on the grounds of mock exam results is not available.

We would like to highlight the second point which means that Ofqual will not accept appeals which are based on challenges to the school's professional judgement when determining CAGs or simply because a student is disappointed with their grades. Appeal forms that have already been submitted will be reviewed against the new grounds for appeal. Please understand that the much narrower grounds for appeal will mean that the school may decide not to proceed with sending an appeal to an exam board if the reasons for appeal no longer meet the new criteria specified by Ofqual. The appeal form on the school website has now been updated to reflect the new Ofqual guidance. Please remember that appeal forms should be e-mailed to Mrs Vaughan by 28 August 2020.

9. What are my options if the school won't appeal to the exam board on my behalf?

When Ofqual provides schools with guidance on how the appeals process will now work, we suspect that the options for appeal will be quite restricted, especially now that the standardised grades produced by exam boards have been invalidated. If there is sufficient evidence to support an appeal, then the school will do all it can to appeal on behalf of a candidate. However, if there is insufficient evidence the school may decide not to appeal to an exam board. If a candidate is not happy with this outcome, they can appeal the school's decision by completing a form found on the school's website. The process to do this is explained in section 6 of the document called *Summer 2020: information about centre assessed grades, results and the appeals process* which is

available on the school website. If, after appealing the school's decision, a candidate is still not happy then they may contact the exam board for advice.

10. What other options do I have if I can't appeal and I am still disappointed with my grades?

If you are determined to improve your grade(s) then entering for exams in the autumn is probably your best remaining option, but before doing so we would encourage you to contact your teachers and seek their advice about an autumn entry.

11. Who can give me some advice and guidance from school about my next steps after Year 11, 12 or 13?

Please contact Mr Fennell or Mrs Brenton for advice about UCAS and next steps after sixth form. If you need help with queries about entry to the sixth form or progression from Y12 into Y13, please contact Mr Heffernan, Mr Wiggall, Mrs Brenton or Mrs Todd. Contact Mrs Brenton for queries about progression to the college or other post-16 pathways.

12. Is there anyone outside of school that can give me advice and guidance?

Yes! We should always be your first port of call but there are also some useful telephone helplines and websites which are provided by the National Careers Service, Ofqual and the exam boards. Please see the table in section 4 in the document called *Summer 2020: information about centre assessed grades, results and the appeals process* which is available on the school website for more details.

13. What should I do if I think that the school has been biased or discriminated against me when it was deciding my centre assessment grades?

An agreed set of principles and a rigorous and robust quality assurance process was followed to minimise the possibility of bias or discrimination affecting the centre assessment grades produced by the school. Therefore, we think it is very unlikely that bias or discrimination should be a cause for concern. However, if a candidate has evidence that the school has not behaved with care or integrity when determining centre assessment grades or rank orders then please contact Mrs Percy, Headteacher, directly. If a candidate is concerned that they have evidence of serious malpractice by the school or college, it may be appropriate to bring those concerns directly to the exam board although this does not constitute an appeal which must be made to an exam board via the school.

14. Should I enter for any exams in the autumn series to try to boost my grades?

If you remain disappointed with one or more of your grades and are willing to work hard independently over the next few months then it may be worth considering entering for exams that will take place in all GCSE and AS/A level subjects in the autumn. We strongly recommend that you talk to your subject teachers about if this would be worthwhile in your case. AS/A level exams will run from 5 to 23 October and GCSE exams will run from 2 to 23 November. The same number and format of exam papers will run in each subject, although non-exam assessment will not contribute to grades awarded from the autumn exam series except in art. Candidates may only enter for exams in the autumn series if they were entered in the same qualification in the summer 2020. The highest grade from that awarded in the summer and the autumn will count.

15. What is the process for entering for exams in the autumn?

All students will receive an entry form for the autumn series inside their results envelope which is also available on the school website. The fees for entries will be paid for by the school and so there is no charge for making an entry. The deadline for returning the entry form to Mrs Vaughan (Exams Officer) is 3 September for all AS/A level subjects and 16 September for all GCSEs, except English and maths GCSE which has a deadline of 1 October.