



**South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust**

# **Extraordinary Policy for the release of examination grades during Covid 19 restrictions**

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## Introduction

Due to the Covid 19 lockdown, public examinations did not take place and students were awarded grades based on assessments conducted at each school and submitted as 'Centre Assessed Grades' or CAGs.

The methodology for compiling these grades was not set out precisely by the DfE because of the very different approaches to assessment that take place in schools and so schools were also asked to submit a 'Ranking order' or RO, for each subject. The RO was described as part of the internal process that would allow examination boards to alter grade boundaries for an examination centre if they needed to.

These CAGs and ROs were originally described as internal data that would not be shared with students. After they were submitted, the government received clarification that students have a legal entitlement to request this information. The government has passed this notification on to schools who are advised to agree a common policy for how to release this information fairly and securely. This is the policy which will be used by schools in SMART schools Trust.

## Agreed Principles

Following detailed discussion and consideration of advice from ASCL, the government select committee and CST, Trust leaders have agreed the following policy principles.

1. Our decisions are based on maximising the future chances of pupils and the future ability of our staff to adapt to new models of assessment.
2. All schools in the Trust utilise this same policy and practices without exception.
3. The Trust and each school takes collective responsibility for the awarding of grades and the mechanisms employed. Hence, none of the data represents the sole view of an individual teacher.
4. We will provide with their CAG within one month of them requesting it.
5. No CAGs will be given to pupils until the Monday of the following week after the release of results. This is to both ensure that there is no confusion over grading and to ensure that pupils have time to reflect before choosing next steps.
6. Students and staff have worked exceptionally hard over numerous years and we commit to doing everything in our ability to ensure that press reporting is positive and focussed on praise for the hard work and determination involved. Students will have a milestone moment in the career disrupted through Covid 19 arrangements and we must ensure that this is not the pervading story.
7. The hierarchy of controls for Covid 19 that have been in use over the summer in schools must be adhered to as set out in DfE guidance (Appendix 1)
8. All pupils have the option of collecting their results on site or at home and neither group will be disadvantaged in terms of the support available to them. From noon those wishing to have results sent to them will receive them with a view to all results having been released (either collected or emailed) as soon as is possible within the restrictions of Covid-19.

9. So as to not adversely disadvantage those seeking next steps appointments at other organisations. We will scrutinise the results and compare them to the CAGs so that staff are pre-warned of students whose CAG is more favourable than their awarded grade so that support can be offered.
10. During IAG meetings if pupils sign documentation to agree, the member of staff can share the CAG with next destination organisations where the CAG is higher than the awarded grade. This process can legally take place at any time after the 8am limit on results day.
11. Headteachers in SMART are awarded the autonomy of applying this policy, adhering to these principles to the best of their ability without the need for CEO or Trust Board approval.
12. The release of Ranking Orders (ROs) risks compromising the data security of other students and so, as advised by ASCL and CST this data will not be routinely provided. If ROs are subject to a SAR (Subject Access Request) then only the raw number will be released if, and only if, we are certain that the ROs of other students cannot be surmised. The release of ROs is awaiting legal guidance and hence we may need to review this position.
13. We are committed to keeping students informed at every stage of the process.

## How We Provide Advice to Students

It is good practice for students to be contacted regarding the arrangements for results days prior to the end of the summer term. There is no standardised letter or suggested format for such information and schools should include this together with their usual news letters or methods for home contact.

Students will receive a standard letter (Appendix A) together with their results on results day. This will set out the position of the school and provide clear messages regarding how to access further advice and guidance.

All students will have the offer of an additional interview (IAG) to discuss their next steps in learning and any questions related to their results or how they were awarded. These interviews will be scheduled so as to adhere to the Covid 19 safety measures.

During the IAG interview, if a student's next steps placement is dependent on their grades and the CAG grade is higher than their published grade, the member of staff will have been alerted. They will inform the student of the CAG and ask for the permission of the student to share their grade with the next steps placement on their behalf (See Appendix B).

If a student requests their CAG and they are not on the list of those whose CAG grades are higher, this request will be captured on appendix B and these will be forwarded to the Headteacher and the Trust Data Protection Officer for consideration.

## Release of CAGs to Students

The DPO in conjunction with the Head will decide if the request is for CAG or constitutes a wider SAR.

If the request is for a CAG then the school will aim to contact the student as soon as possible but no longer than a week after the request was submitted. The student will be provided with their CAGs via a standardised letter (Appendix C)

If the request is considered by the DPO to be an SAR then the student is contacted as soon as possible and advised to make an application under the Data Protection Policy and submit it to the School. A copy will be forwarded to the DPO for action.

## Release of data via an SAR

SARs (Subject Action Requests) are dealt with under the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

In this case the school will release what has been requested but with the restrictions described in this policy applied.

## Arrangements for the Collection of Results

If a school is inviting students or staff onto site then they must abide by the operating procedures that are being operated by the school to protect students and staff from infection. These government guidelines available at the time of planning results days in school are reproduced below. Updated guidelines may be available and so changes to these procedures may be applied by the school to ensure compliance with current directives.

Schools, FE colleges and other skills providers planning to open their doors to pupils and students on results day should continue to follow the hierarchy of controls they have used over the summer term, and that summer holiday providers are following during August.

In particular this means:

- ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school and/or college or other provider
- cleaning hands more often than usual
- ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach

- minimising contact and mixing as far as possible, by keeping pupils and students in small consistent groups. Schools, FE colleges and other providers should aim to practise social distancing in line with [current government guidance on social distancing](#).

Students, pupils and parents should follow [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#) when planning their travel to school, and be encouraged to walk or cycle where possible. Schools should consider the potential for broader social mixing outside school when deciding their approach and communicate with pupils about not socialising with each other in groups outside school.

Schools should continue to make clear to parents that they cannot gather at entrance gates or doors, or enter the site (unless they have a pre-arranged appointment).

Further advice can be found in [protective measures guidance for education and childcare settings](#).

From the start of the Autumn term, schools should follow the new [schools full opening guidance](#) and [FE colleges and providers the 2020 autumn term guidance](#)."

## Appendix A

Information to accompany the release of national examination grades, summer 2020. Please include this information with any other material you are choosing to distribute on the day. The content should be transferred to your normal letter headed documentation.

### Information to accompany the results notification

Congratulations on your examination results and for all of the hard work and study which was involved throughout your time at school which got you to this point.

We are extremely pleased that the awarding organisations and OfQual were able to find a way to provide you with examination grades despite having to cancel all final examinations due to Covid-19. Over many years, our school has developed ways of estimating grades with a high degree of accuracy, which draw on lots of information from a range of teachers. We have a really good track record of predicting these results correctly but the model devised by OfQual had to take into account a whole range of other factors. These included a statistical model to ensure that grades awarded this year are consistent with those awarded to other cohorts in other years and to ensure that the right proportions of each grade were awarded across the country. This means that the awarded grades may not directly reflect the recommendations of the school.

We believe the model they devised is the fairest possible approach available under these extreme circumstances and we hope you are happy that the results you received correctly reflect your hard work and achievements.

You may be planning further study or employment as your next steps and we can certainly help you with these decisions especially if you didn't get the grades you were expecting and would like us to speak on your behalf to your future college or employer to provide you with a reference. Please make an appointment to see a member of staff as soon as possible.

Please also make an appointment if you want to know more about how your grades were awarded or want to ask any questions. If you are not able to meet in person then staff would be happy to meet you online.

## Appendix B

The following points should be included in the forms that are completed during the advice and guidance interview with the student.

### Advice and Guidance request slips.

I give my permission for the school to discuss my performance whilst at school with my next steps organisation including my centre assessed grades.

The organisations I authorise the school to speak to are as follows (please list)

Name of the organisation	Course or employment applied for	Grades required for entry

I understand that any centre assessed grades (CAGs) that were sent to the examination board by the school are not official grades that I am able to use in future job or college applications but despite this I would like to be informed of them.

I understand that the school may take up to 7 days to process this request and provide me with the CAGs. I understand that requesting these grades does not in any way prejudice my right to lodge a complaint with the examination boards, a complaint with the school or a subject access request in line with Data Protection legislation.

Signed (in person or by email) \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix C

Following a request to be provided with CAGs

### Letter to accompany CAGs if they have been requested.

Dear

I am replying to your request for information about the grade/s that our centre provided to the exam board/s in respect of the qualification/s listed below. For ease of reference, the grade awarded by the exam board is in the first column, and the grade submitted by our centre in the second column.

*List of relevant qualifications, final grade, and centre-assessed grade*

*As applicable:*

Where there is a difference, it is helpful to understand the process which has taken place. The grades that we submitted were our best assessment of what you would have achieved if you had taken exams. However, the exam boards then applied a 'standardisation model' so that the distribution of grades awarded this year is consistent with those awarded in other years at a national level, and this process inevitably results in some centre-assessed grades being adjusted.

This process is aimed at ensuring fairness and consistency between students in different years and in different schools and colleges so that, for example, it does not result in more students nationally being awarded higher grades this year when compared to cohorts in previous years. It is done to ensure that this year's grades are as valid as in any other year.

However, I understand it may feel confusing and unfair to you where there is a difference between a centre-assessed grade and the final grade awarded by the exam board. I can reassure you that your teachers approached the task of assessing grades with the utmost diligence, and that they felt the grades submitted were a fair and accurate reflection. The final grades awarded by the exam boards are the product of a nationally applied process, aimed at ensuring that your grades are consistent with those of students in other years, and therefore have equal value.

I am also conscious that this has been a difficult and anxious time for you as a result of the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic. If you would like any further support or information, please do get in touch, so that we can arrange an appointment for you to see a member of staff.

The National Careers Service has also set an exam results helpline during August 2020. Young people or their parents can contact the helpline on 0800 100 900 to speak to a professionally qualified careers adviser if they need advice on their next steps. The helpline will be open from 8am to 10pm from Thursday 13 August until Friday 28 August.

After these dates, young people will be able to access ongoing support from the National Careers Service at any time by calling 0800 100 900, visiting [nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/contact-us](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/contact-us) or searching for the National Careers Service on Facebook and Twitter.

You have the right, under current legislation to make a formal complaint to any exam board if you feel they have applied the process incorrectly. You also have the right to make a formal complaint to the governors of the school if you feel that the school has not followed the national guidance correctly ([Link](#)). Finally you also have the right to make a SAR (Subject Action Request) regarding any data held by the school. Please be aware that SARs typically take a month for the school to process ([Link](#))