

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-958
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/01684/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

1st June 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 28 May regarding Petition P-05-958 Recent Decisions Regarding AS Grades 2020.

In my letter of 21st April, I responded in detail to the matters raised in the petition and the concerns of the learner who launched the petition that you recap at the start of your letter.

I feel it is important to reiterate that work already completed by Year 12 learners will not have been wasted, as it will have informed the AS grade that is calculated for the learner and this grade can subsequently be used for UCAS applications. This is why Qualifications Wales has prioritised calculation of a grade for these learners. The learning undertaken in Year 12 will also have served as important preparation for Year 13, allowing learners to develop knowledge, understanding and skills which will support A2 level work. My previous letter also outlined in detail why AS grades calculated this year cannot be used in the final A level determination, so I will not repeat those points again here.

In terms of the two specific additional questions you have raised following consideration of this petition;

Why it is not possible to use the ranking of students within each grade that is being produced to assign marks, in a similar way to the Universal Mark Scale?

Assigning a number to the rank order produced when all learners for one qualification are collected into one rank order and aligning it to a scale such as the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) assumes that the distribution of positions in the rank order is linear, when they may not be. The rank order tells us about the relative position of learners in relation to one another but it does not measure how far apart those learners are from one another. Therefore, there is

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

still no way of accurately estimating the marks that learners would have received just from the rank order.

What the views of teachers are on the measures that have been decided?

As you will appreciate, due to pandemic situation and the need to respond urgently to provide clarity to anxious learners, when the initial decisions on the approach to AS and A levels were made, there was limited time to engage with stakeholders. Although Qualifications Wales did test aspects of the decisions taken with several stakeholder groups such as Headteachers, Estyn and Unions. Since this time discussions have taken place with small groups of stakeholders and, whilst there are a variety of views, there is general support for this approach.

Responses to Qualifications Wales' recent consultation on arrangements for the 2020 examinations are currently being analysed. Although there was not a specific question related to this issue, some views have been shared which relate to the proposed methods and will be considered.

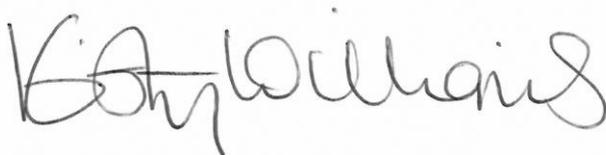
I am aware that learners in Year 10 and Year 12 who are halfway through their GCSE and A level courses are worried about how they will cover the work ahead of summer 2021. Understandably, teachers share these concerns and want to do their best for their learners. For these reasons we think adjustments to exams next summer may be needed.

We hope to share more information about summer 2021 as soon as possible. This will still be at a high level, but I want to reassure you that we are working hard to find answers to some very difficult questions.

I am sorry the learners signing the Petition are disappointed with the options we have arrived at in terms of AS Levels. I would of course have preferred that examinations went ahead in the normal way but clearly under the circumstances this was not a possibility and therefore my priority has been on ensure arrangements are in place to ensure the progression of learners.

To achieve this, I have worked very closely with Qualifications Wales and the WJEC to develop what we believe to be the most equitable and sensible approach under difficult circumstances to give certainty for learners at a time when it is most required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

Kirsty Williams AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education