

Interim Chief Regulator and Chair
Dame Glenys Stacey DBE
Ofqual
Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH

7 September 2020

Dear Dame Glenys

Congratulations on your appointment as Interim Chief Regulator. ASCL looks forward to working closely with you in this role.

You may be aware that I wrote to your predecessor Sally Collier on 24 August. In this letter, we shared the strong sense of injustice felt by many school and college leaders, on behalf of their students, about the way in which grades for A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications were awarded this year. ASCL was supportive of the principle of using a statistical model to moderate centre-assessed grades (CAGs) and also, reluctantly, supported the decision to revert to the higher of either CAGs or calculated results when the problems with the statistical model became clear. Along with many other organisations, we felt that this was the least bad option at this point.

However, we continue to be deeply concerned that, as a result of centres putting different weights on their historical performance when determining CAGs, some injustices remain. Many schools and colleges feel that they have inadvertently disadvantaged their students by following Ofqual's instructions to include consideration of previous results in a centre for a subject, in the expectation that CAGs would be moderated to ensure consistency across centres. They are concerned that students in schools and colleges which placed more weight on alignment with previous performance will have, as a result, received lower grades than students in centres which placed a lower priority on this objective. In some cases, this may have led to students missing out on college and university places, or having to resit exams.

We recognise that correcting this possible injustice is not straightforward. We have continued to discuss possible solutions with your team, including a specific proposal put forward by David Blow, an ASCL member who also sits on Ofqual's external advisory group on exam grading. This proposal would extend the grounds for appeal in what we believe would be a measured and manageable way, by enabling centres to resubmit CAGs which were in line with students' calculated grades, but which included unrepresentative previous years' performance in the calculation. We submitted this proposal for consideration on 28 August, and have not yet received a response. We would appreciate an indication of whether this proposal, or any others, are being seriously considered.

/cont'd.....

You may be aware that ASCL, together with the NAHT, NEU and NASUWT, has written to the Secretary of State to call for an independent inquiry into what happened this year in order to understand what went wrong and to learn lessons for the future. We are particularly concerned about the arrangements for examinations in summer 2021 and the fact that there is no contingency plan in the event of further disruption. The overriding priority must be focused on ensuring that there is a robust strategy to ensure that young people are not disadvantaged next year. We have heard little from either Ofqual or the Department for Education to reassure us that such a strategy is in place.

I would welcome an opportunity as soon as possible to discuss these issues.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geoff Barton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Geoff Barton | General Secretary

130 Regent Road, Leicester LE1 7PG

0116 299 1122 | geoff.barton@ascl.org.uk | www.ascl.org.uk