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Statistical Bulletin

Appeals for GCSE and A level: Summer 2012 Exam Series

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Introduction

During the summer 2012 exam series, over 5.9 million GCSE and more than 2.4 million A level (AS and A level) certifications were made in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

If a school or college is concerned about a candidate's grade, it can ask the awarding organisation to investigate the grade through the enquiries about results process.

Following the release of results for the summer 2012 exam series there were 279,046 enquiries about results. This is in the context of over 21 million unit entries for exams and internal assessments in 2012. For A level, there were a total of 14,120 subject grade changes following enquiries about results, and for GCSE a total of 31,510 subject grade changes. Together, A level and GCSE grade changes represented 0.54 per cent of all subject certifications.

If a school or college is dissatisfied with the outcome of an enquiry about result, it can appeal to the awarding organisation. An appeal can be in relation to one or more candidates' grades. Two post-results stages are available for appeals:

Stage 1: review by senior member of the awarding organisation

Following the summer 2012 exam series there were 493 stage 1 appeals made. This compares with 401 appeals in 2011 and represents an increase of 23 per cent. There were 61 appeals that resulted in changes to candidates' grades at stage 1, compared with 34 in 2011.

Stage 2: appeals panel

A school or college may progress an appeal to stage 2 if it is still dissatisfied with the outcome after stage 1. Of the 493 stage 1 appeals following the summer 2012 exam series, 41 progressed to a stage 2 appeal. This compares with 40 in 2011. One of the 41 stage 2 appeals resulted in grade changes in 2012, compared with six in 2011.

In 2012, the majority of appeals were dealt with at stage 1, with 8 per cent progressing to stage 2. This maintains the trend of the previous five years.

This statistical bulletin, published by the qualifications regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, presents data on appeals made to awarding organisations for the summer 2012 GCSE and A level exam series. The bulletin summarises the performance of the six awarding organisations offering these qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (Northern Ireland) (CCEA)
- Edexcel
- International Curriculum & Assessment Agency (Examinations) ICAA(E)
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- WJEC.

The awarding organisations provide the qualifications regulators – Ofqual, the Welsh Government and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) – with statistical data on appeals.

This bulletin:

- details the processes and 2012 reporting arrangements for appeals;
- gives data for the six awarding organisations in terms of the two stages for appeals;
- gives data on the number of appeals received, the number resulting in subject grade changes and the performance of the awarding organisations in meeting agreed timelines.

Once published, we may revise data in subsequent bulletins. In this bulletin some historical figures have been revised since last year's bulletin.

Data source

The data are provided by the awarding organisations. The awarding organisations and the qualifications regulators have a formal and agreed schedule for reporting on enquiries about results and appeals, which was introduced in 2003.

The post-results process

Enquiries about results

Every year, the GCSE and A level awarding organisations publish information and guidance for schools and colleges on making use of the post-results services following exams and the issue of results.

Awarding organisations issue the results of summer exams in August. If a school or college is concerned about a candidate's grade, it can make an enquiry about the result to the awarding organisation, which will then review the accuracy of the grade. Candidates can't make an enquiry about a result directly; they must ask through their school or college. This is because schools and colleges have responsibility for entering candidates for exams. Private candidates are an exception; they can ask the awarding organisations directly.

If the review of the result shows that marking or processing errors have been made and the candidate's grade is incorrect, the awarding organisation will change the result up or down, as appropriate.

A bulletin called *Enquiries about Results for GCSE and A level: Summer 2012 Exam Series* was published in December 2012 and is available at:
www.ofqual.gov.uk/standards/statistics/enquiries-about-results .

Appeals

If a school or college has gone through the enquiries about results process and is dissatisfied with the outcome, it can appeal to the awarding organisation. An appeal can be in relation to one or more candidates' grades, if they are all thought to be impacted by the same issue.

A school or college must make an appeal within 14 days of receiving the outcome of the enquiry about results.

There are two stages in the appeals process:

- Stage 1 is a review of the case by a senior member of the awarding organisation who has not been involved previously with the particular case.
- Stage 2 is a presentation of the case to an appeals panel. The awarding organisation convenes the panel. It will comprise at least three members, one of whom must be independent (that means someone who is not, and has not been, a member of the awarding organisation's board or committees, or an employee or examiner at the awarding organisation, at any time during the previous five years). A school or college can take the appeal to stage 2 only after going through stage 1.

Both stages should usually be completed within 50 working days of the appeal being lodged with the awarding organisation, with agreement of both parties. In some cases appeals are not resolved until after 50 days from the initial receipt of the appeal, to allow a fair appeal hearing with appropriate evidence and individuals present from both the school or college and the awarding organisation.

Our Examination Procedures Review Service

If a school or college is dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage 2 appeal, it can apply to our Examination Procedures Review Service. The Examination Procedures Review Service is one of our teams and has taken over the work previously carried out by the Examinations Appeals Board.

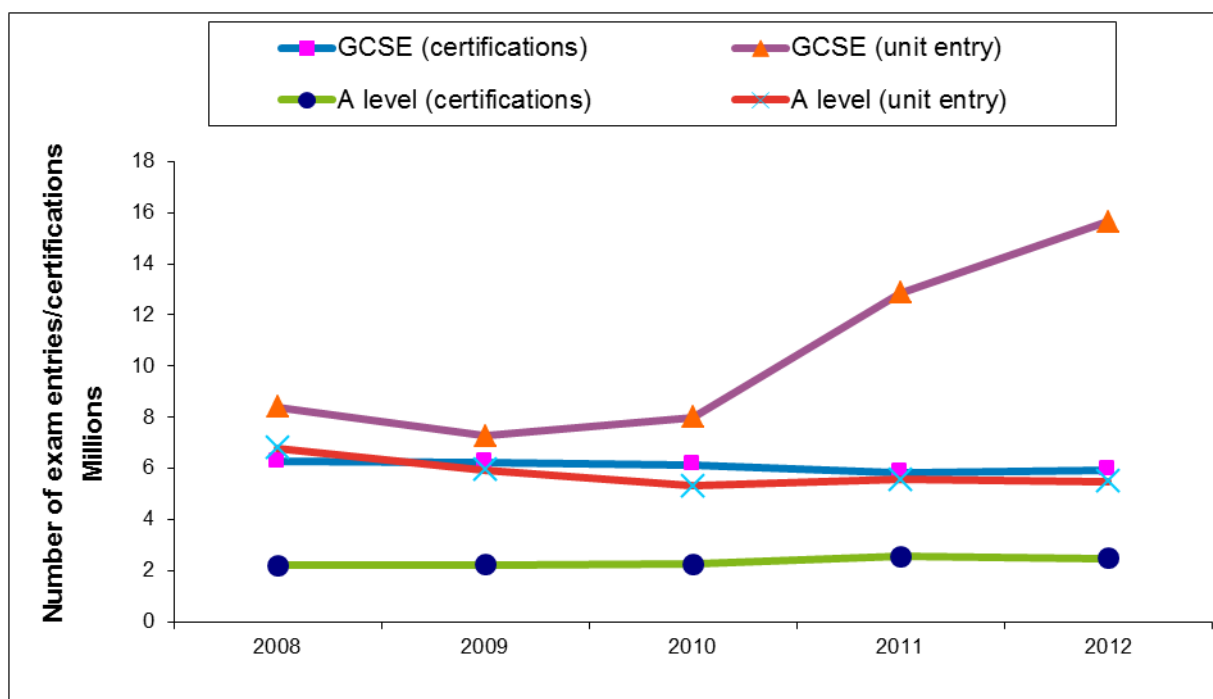
We will review each application and arrange a review hearing for it, if appropriate. We will look at whether the awarding organisation has followed the right procedures and whether it has used them properly and fairly. Where we think there is a solid case and we are not confident the published results are appropriate, we will ask the awarding organisation to reconsider the case. Otherwise, we will uphold the original decision of the awarding organisation. We might appoint an observer to monitor the reconsideration of a case. Where appropriate, we can offer wider recommendations to awarding organisations or other regulatory authorities.

You can find further details further details of the Examination Procedures Review Service's work at: www.ofqual.gov.uk/complaints-and-appeals/exam-procedure-review-service .

Summer 2012 exam series

During the summer 2012 exam series, there were over 5.9 million GCSE and more than 2.4 million A level (AS and A level) certifications. At unit level, there were 15.7 million GCSE unit entries and 5.5 million A level (AS and A level) unit entries (see table 1 and figure 1.)

Figure 1: Total entries for GCSE and GCE, summer exam series, 2008 – 2012



Following the summer 2012 exam series, appeals were received for the two qualification types as shown below:

	GCSE appeals	A level appeals	Appeals resulting in a changes to candidates' grades	
			GCSE	A level
Stage 1 (review)	217	276	21	41
Stage 2 (appeals panel)	19	22		

The number of appeals is a very small proportion of the 8.4 million certifications and the 21.1 million entries from the summer exam series.

Stage 1 and stage 2 appeals

(See tables 2, 3 and 4, and figure 2.)

There were 493 stage 1 appeals made against GCSE and A level results, an increase of 23 per cent from 2011, when there were 401. Of the 493 stage 1 appeals, 112 (23 per cent) were upheld by the awarding organisations. This compares with 71 (18 per cent) upheld appeals in 2011.

Sixty-two appeals resulted in changes to candidates' grades: 61 of which went up and one which went down. This compares with a total of 40 in 2011. Changes to grades are at unit level and may or may not impact the overall qualification grade.

An appeal can be in relation to one or more candidates' grades. The 493 stage 1 appeal cases from the summer 2012 exam series involved challenges to 6,158 unit grades and resulted in a total of 151 candidate qualification grade changes. This compares with 6,680 unit grade challenges in 2011 and 135 candidate qualification grade changes, as shown below:

	Number of appeals for GCSE and A level	Appeals resulting in changes to candidates' grades	Number of unit grades being challenged	Total number of qualification grade changes
2012	493	62	6,158	151
2011	401	40	6,680	135

Note: Data at candidate level were collected for the first time in 2012, with figures for 2011 obtained for comparison.

Of the stage 1 appeals, 41 progressed to stage 2: one more than in 2011. The majority of appeals were dealt with at stage 1, with just 8 per cent progressing to stage 2, maintaining the trend of the previous five years.

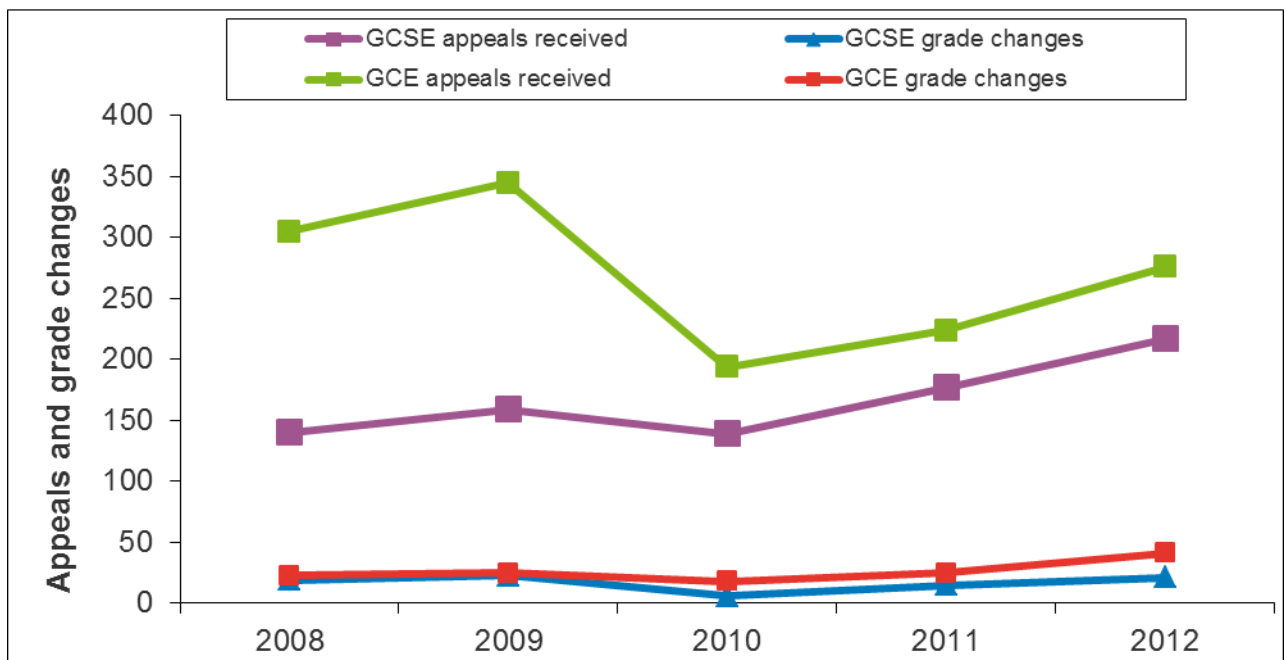
Seven of the stage 2 appeals were upheld in 2012, one of which resulted in an upward change to a candidate's qualification grade. This compares with six stage 2 appeals upheld in 2011, with four qualification grade changes.

All stage 1 appeals have been completed. There were 11 stage 2 appeals that were not completed within the target timeline of 50 days from the initial receipt of the appeal. At the time of writing, five stage 2 appeals were still in progress.

The number of appeals received and those resulting in grade changes have increased from 2012, and this continues the upward trend over the last three years.

However, when looking across the last five years, the number of appeals received for A level has reduced, while GCSE has seen an increase. The majority of GCSEs are now unitised, which has led to an increase in the number of unit entries. This may be a factor in the increase of appeals received for GCSE.

Figure 2: Appeals received and grade changes, summer exam series, 2008 – 2012



Tables

Table 1: Total entries for GCSE and A level summer exam series, 2008 – 2012

England, Wales & Northern Ireland

	Year	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	CCEA	WJEC	ICAA(E)	Total
GCSE (certifications)	2008	2,951,100	1,365,500	1,224,000	163,700	564,000		6,268,200
	2009	2,800,900	1,372,100	1,313,500	168,900	581,800		6,237,100
	2010	2,708,000	1,383,700	1,256,400	175,200	602,200		6,125,600
	2011	2,537,600	1,439,200	1,059,400	149,400	622,500	16,200	5,824,400
	2012	2,484,400	1,580,300	1,053,700	141,100	677,200	1,900	5,938,500
A level (certifications)	2008	885,000	571,000	558,700	48,500	125,100		2,188,300
	2009	913,400	518,600	570,500	57,100	157,800		2,217,400
	2010	942,900	470,300	596,100	58,000	182,500		2,249,700
	2011	1,041,300	605,100	630,600	60,400	199,000		2,536,400
	2012	1,008,500	608,800	588,500	63,700	197,400		2,467,100
Total certifications	2008	3,836,100	1,936,500	1,782,600	212,200	689,100		8,456,500
	2009	3,714,300	1,890,600	1,884,000	226,000	739,700		8,454,600
	2010	3,650,900	1,854,000	1,852,500	233,200	784,600		8,375,200
	2011	3,578,900	2,044,400	1,690,000	209,800	821,600	16,200	8,360,800
	2012	3,492,900	2,189,100	1,642,200	204,800	874,600	1,900	8,405,500
GCSE (unit entry)	2008	2,973,800	2,442,900	2,737,800	72,200	169,000		8,395,800
	2009	2,826,800	1,700,900	2,494,000	88,800	167,500		7,278,000
	2010	2,948,800	2,166,200	2,544,900	108,600	229,100		7,997,600
	2011	5,062,300	3,522,600	3,129,600	228,500	908,600	16,300	12,868,000
	2012	6,817,200	3,617,800	2,938,200	335,900	1,942,400	1,900	15,653,400
A level (unit entry)	2008	2,684,700	1,874,100	1,697,700	138,800	391,100		6,786,300
	2009	2,348,300	1,473,400	1,546,900	150,100	409,200		5,927,900
	2010	2,103,600	1,231,800	1,429,000	134,700	412,400		5,311,600
	2011	2,095,200	1,488,900	1,399,400	139,700	424,600		5,547,800
	2012	2,063,700	1,519,800	1,333,500	145,100	423,200		5,485,400
Total unit entries	2008	5,658,400	4,317,000	4,435,500	211,000	560,100		15,182,100
	2009	5,175,000	3,174,300	4,040,900	238,900	576,600		13,205,800
	2010	5,052,400	3,398,100	3,973,900	243,300	641,500		13,309,200
	2011	7,157,500	5,011,500	4,529,000	368,200	1,333,300	16,300	18,415,800
	2012	8,880,900	5,137,600	4,271,600	481,000	2,365,600	1,900	21,138,800

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. All figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.
3. Figures have been rounded independently so may not sum to the total.
4. ICAA(E) offered GCSEs for the first time in 2011. In previous years specifications were delivered in conjunction with CCEA.

Table 2: Appeals that resulted in a grade change for GCSE and A level, summer exam series, 2008 – 2012

England, Wales & Northern Ireland					
		Number of appeals received	Number of appeals resulting in grade changes ¹		
	Year		Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
GCSE	2008	140	19	0	19
	2009	159	20	3	23
	2010	139	6	0	6
	2011	177	12	3	15
	2012	217	21	0	21
A level	2008	305	22	1	23
	2009	345	24	1	25
	2010	194	18	0	18
	2011	224	22	3	25
	2012	276	40	1	41
Total	2008	445	41	1	42
	2009	504	44	4	48
	2010	333	24	0	24
	2011	401	34	6	40
	2012	493	61	1	62

Notes:

1. Grades may go up or down following an appeal.
2. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.

Table 3: Appeals for GCSE and A level, by appeal type, summer exam series, 2008 – 2012

England, Wales & Northern Ireland					
Number of appeals					
	Year	Stage 1 appeals received	Appeals progressing to stage 2	Stage 2 appeals completed within 50 days of receipt	% of stage 2 appeals completed within 50 days of receipt
GCSE	2008	140	11	9	82%
	2009	159	22	17	77%
	2010	139	11	11	100%
	2011	177	16	9	56%
	2012	217	19	13	68%
A level	2008	305	28	24	86%
	2009	345	19	14	74%
	2010	194	18	17	94%
	2011	224	24	19	79%
	2012	276	22	17	77%
Total	2008	445	39	33	85%
	2009	504	41	31	76%
	2010	333	29	28	97%
	2011	401	40	28	70%
	2012	493	41	30	73%

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.

Table 4: Total appeals by awarding organisation, summer exam series, 2008 – 2012

England, Wales & Northern Ireland

		Appeals			
	Year	Total enquiries received ¹	Stage 1 appeals received	Appeals progressing to stage 2	Appeals that resulted in changes to candidates' grades ²
AQA	2008	69,800	77	5	6
	2009	71,300	75	18	2
	2010	73,800	60	12	4
	2011	90,200	80	18	1
	2012	121,000	86	20	4
Edexcel	2008	38,800	272	17	26
	2009	43,600	314	10	32
	2010	41,900	165	7	15
	2011	51,100	199	10	14
	2012	68,100	252	7	34
OCR	2008	38,300	85	17	9
	2009	38,000	106	11	12
	2010	38,200	96	10	2
	2011	40,500	103	12	16
	2012	51,500	113	14	12
CCEA	2008	6,400	8	0	1
	2009	6,200	7	1	2
	2010	7,600	12	0	3
	2011	8,200	16	0	7
	2012	9,200	27	0	11
WJEC	2008	6,200	3	0	0
	2009	8,300	2	1	0
	2010	10,200	0	0	0
	2011	14,500	3	0	2
	2012	29,300	15	0	1
ICAA(E)	2008				
	2009				
	2010				
	2011	170	0	0	0
	2012	-	0	0	0
Total	2008	159,500	445	39	42
	2009	167,400	504	41	48
	2010	171,700	333	29	24
	2011	204,670	401	40	40
	2012	279,100	493	41	62

Notes:

1. Figures for enquiries cover all services, and have been rounded to the nearest hundred.
2. Grades may go up or down following an appeal.
3. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
4. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. It had two enquiries but this is represented as a '-' due to rounding.

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