



The Raw Marks NSEAD Survey Report

Raw Marks is a National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD) survey report which aims to identify the impact on teachers and learners of giving centre-assessed raw marks to art and design GCSE and GCE candidates.

This report includes a timeline to map how the process of giving raw marks to students was initially rolled out, together with the guidance that is available to support the process. We have included feedback from NSEAD's member forum and qualitative and quantitative data from our Raw Marks teacher survey. This report concludes that an independent subject-specific review of the process is urgently needed, and given our findings, that the process ends as soon as possible.

Foreword

The Raw Marks Survey Report has identified a number of unintended consequences – with the process and giving all marks to art and design students impacting most on teachers and learners. The report reflects the overwhelming need for a subject-specific review of the procedure. Art and design teachers are calling for change.

We believe that the well-intended initiative to increase the transparency of the assessment process, is now having a detrimental impact on the very people it wished to help, our learners. Time and time again, year on year, and now in this survey, we have learned of candidates receiving their marks and experiencing high levels of anxiety before or even on days when they are sitting exams in other subjects. Teachers report that many of their candidates mistakenly convert their marks to a 'final' grade using grade boundaries that are easily accessed online from previous years. Our survey also shows the impact on teacher workload and wellbeing; and that the process can detrimentally impact on teacher professionalism. All this, just when our subject is facing a teacher recruitment and a retention crisis.

We also ask, is the procedure fair? Meaning which socio-economic groups are more likely to question their marks, and which groups therefore will more often have their marks favourably changed? Until our questions are answered, we call for the process of giving raw marks to students to end. Should it continue at all, an urgent subject-specific review of the process cannot come soon enough.

Michele Gregson

General secretary and CEO of NSEAD

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Timeline for the process of giving raw marks to students

i. 1993-2016 – Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice

This JCQ Code of Practice required centres (schools and colleges) to have appeals procedures relating to teacher marked assessments in place, and that marked assessments would be available to candidates. It did not expressly require that students were given their raw marks.

ii. 10 December 2015 and 11 March 2016 – Consultation for marking reviews begins on behalf of Ofqual

The consultation included centre-based examination marking reviews. Subjects represented by respondents are not identified. See consultation findings below in iii.

iii. May 2016 – An analysis of consultation responses: marking reviews, appeals, grade boundaries and Code of Practice, AlphaPlus Consultancy Ltd*.

The 111-page report included 91 responses; 19 teachers for personal responses; 20 school / college or academy chains; 1348 student responses. The process of review was surveyed. No explicit mention whatsoever is made of the teacher marking of non-examined assessment (NEA) internally or externally set components which is unique to art and design GCSE/AS/A level. Comments regarding marking reviews included: Concerns about workloads in schools, and the review of 'marked scripts' when they were returned; the potential requirement of submitting work earlier to allow time for centre-based review of marks and its reduction of teaching time in some subjects; a concern about the unintended consequences of the proposals which included possible legal challenges; that proposed changes should be carefully communicated as they have the potential to cause confusion at a time of a lot of existing qualification reform. Ofqual state: 'We will also seek more detailed information on the impact this could have, particularly on schools and colleges.'

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/525983/an-analysis-of-consultation-responses-marking-reviews-appeals-grade-boundaries-and-code-of-practice.pdf

iv. May 2016 – Decisions on marking reviews and appeals, grade boundaries and the Code of Practice, Ofqual

In this 10-page summary, Ofqual summarised the 2015 consultation findings. The schedule for marking reviews outlined (p.3-4):

'For summer 2017 we will: Permit reviews of centre-based marking to be conducted by either centres or a third party. We are also seeking further views on the impact on exam boards, schools and colleges of these proposals before making a final decision on their implementation.'

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f7191ed915d74e622a7dd/Decisions_on_marking_reviews_and_appeals_grade_boundaries_and_the_Code_of_Practice.pdf

v. 2016 – Regulatory impact analysis - marking reviews and appeals, grade boundaries and code of practice, Ofqual:

This is a 37-page full summary of the above document. On page 25-26 Ofqual's intentions for centre-based marking were recorded: **4.3 Review of marking of centre marked assessments** (page 25-27). Ofqual note:

'Generally, these requirements are not significantly different to what is in the Code already, where exam boards must make sure that learners are able to ask a centre to review the mark for their assessment, but currently there is no requirement for learners to be told what mark they have been given... Responses from the exam boards to the consultation on this point raised concerns that the requirements would be disproportionately burdensome.' (p. 26)

Ofqual acknowledged data is not available to ascertain numbers of reviews: 'We do not have information regarding how many reviews schools can expect... In light of the potential impact on schools and colleges of telling their students their results, we will consult further before deciding when to implement this requirement... We will undertake further analysis and collect more information to assess the impact of this proposal. We particularly invite information from schools and colleges on the number of requests for reviews they currently receive and the number they may forecast receiving in the future.' (p. 27)

vi. May 2016 – GCSE and A level enquiries about results: Subject level analyses, Summer 2015 exam series

In this 40-page analysis, Ofqual published results of grades (not marks) for the Summer 2015 series of exams. The document reported primarily on English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and 'facilitating' subjects. Art and design grade changes (post results day) are reported on p. 5-6. The tables showed art and design, when compared to other subjects, had relatively few grade challenges: 10/41 subjects A level; 14/50 subjects for GCSE.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80936ced915d74e622f3ed/2015_EAR_subject-level_analyses.pdf

vii. 3 June 2016 – GCSE, AS and A level marking reviews and appeals: 10 things you need to know, Julie Swan, Ofqual

The research, and subsequent blog authored by Ofqual, offered 10 questions and answers. Julie Swan, noted that at this point, exam boards charge for reviews [of grades] and for appeals.

<https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2016/06/03/gcse-as-and-a-level-marking-reviews-and-appeals-10-things-you-need-to-know/>

viii. September 2017:

Some awarding bodies shared online guidance for examination officers or anyone attending their training. They state it is the responsibility of schools to decide how they are going to inform students of their marks; the format they are going to use, as well as the timescale for issuing marks to allow enough time to carry out any reviews before marks are submitted. Teachers are asked to use 'their professional judgement' about what they think the student will need to see to decide whether to formally request an internal marking review. At this point, some boards recommended schools charge for the review and that this is also dependent on local school policies.

ix. March 2018 onwards – NSEAD Online Forum, NSEAD's member forum:

NSEAD receives its first NSEAD Online forum post 23 March 2018, asking about the marking review process. Threads included one response from a helpful exam-board officer, who noted they were instructed by Ofqual in Autumn 2017. Teachers asked was the system piloted? Members share that the process undermines art and design teachers' professionalism and that it is adding to the already heavy workload. At this point there are explicit concerns regarding the negative experience for students. A teacher shared that one student who received their marks, was no longer going to take A level art despite their mark being very good. For further NSEAD Online forum comments, see xiv. and xv.

x. August 2020 – Notice to centres – Informing candidates of their centre assessed marks, produced on behalf of five awarding bodies, published by JCQ for AQA, CCEA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC. The seven-page notice included 18 FAQs and a link to a suggested template letter to give raw marks to students. The notice stated it was effective from 1 September 2020.

In the FAQs, there is a discrepancy between what candidates can ask to be reviewed: Page 2, FAQ #3, referred to a student's 'mark': 'Candidates must be given all of their marks and can request a review of one or more of those marks.' In the same paper (page 3, #6) it said, 'candidates can request a review of the internal assessment' and, 'What materials should the centre make available to candidates so they can decide whether to proceed with a request for a review of an internal assessment.' Note: Respondents in this survey (2024) indicated that the information has been confusing. They asked: Is it the mark or process of internal assessment that is being reviewed?

This guidance (FAQ #10) noted that it is for centres to decide if they wish to charge candidates for an internal review. <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Notice-to-Centres-Informing-candidates-of-their-centre-assessed-marks.pdf>

xi. Produced on behalf of: AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC Reviews of marking – centre assessed marks GCE coursework, GCE and GCSE non-examination assessments (no date)
JCQ publish a one-page summary of what centres must plan to complete, ahead of the awarding bodies' published deadlines for the submission of marks. In this publication, it says that candidates can request a review of the centre's marking of the assessment. <https://www.jcq.org.uk/notice-to-centres-review-of-centre-marks/>

xii. 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021 – Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (reformed GCE & GCSE specifications)

This is a 44-page booklet for conducting non-examination assessments, published by JCQ. In this booklet the process of internal standardisation and a recommended sequence or process has been described. It sets out what guidance for 'effective' standardisation (p. 17) would contain. On page 16, it instructs centres that they must inform candidates of their centre assessed marks, as a candidate can request a review of the centre's marking before marks are submitted to the awarding body. <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NEA-2021.pdf>

xiii. For 2022-23 and 2023-24 – Notice to Centres: Informing candidates of their centre assessed marks

JCQ's eight-page guidance is modelled on an early version of this notice (September 2020) – it was effective for September 2022 and September 2023 respectively. There are 18 FAQs. A link is also shared from the same page to a JCQ template: 'Reviews of marking template 23-24 suggested template.' The 'Notice to Centres' and the template indicate 'normally five working days is needed to allow candidates to review copies of materials and reach a decision,' and this will vary according to 'the subject, the size of the cohort and the number of subject teachers at the centre.' This template makes explicit that it is the marking that will be reviewed, and that the reviewer will ensure that the student's mark is consistent. However, in the 'Notice to Centres' publication, p.2 #3, it says, it is a review of a mark and not the marking that can be reviewed by candidates: 'Yes. In Art & Design, along with other subjects which have more than one internally assessed component, candidates must be given all of their marks and can request a review of one or more of those marks.'

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments>

xiv. 2021-24 – NSEAD Online (See page 3 (ix.) for earlier and below (xv.) for additional NSEAD forum posts).

Marking reviews (most occurring in May of each year), are a regular NSEAD member forum feature. Posts often refer to the guidance that has caused confusion for art and design teachers and examination officers, and that the process is stressful for both teachers and students alike. Teachers note that art and design is the only GCSE/AS/A level subject where all marks are given to students, and they share that both they and their SLTs are unclear about art and design, subject-specific policies and timescales. They note that the process impacts negatively on small centres where reviews need to be outsourced. One member describes giving raw marks to students as being thrown under a bus.

xv. **30 May 2023 – NSEAD Online:** An indicative poll regarding the process was undertaken by a member in NSEAD Online. There were 334 votes. Of these, 98% wished to ‘Scrap informing students of their marks’ and 0% said, ‘Keep informing students of their marks’; 2% said, ‘Tell students the marks but scrap the appeal system till after official moderation’. Comments included: ‘A student who had underperformed for us then suffered from such depression and anxiety they didn’t feel able to sit their other exams.’

xvi. **16 May 2024 – Change.org petition**

A Change.org petition was organised by an independent art and design teacher who shared the petition in NSEAD Online. The petition aimed to: ‘Abolish the process of issuing raw marks in Art subjects to students’ It received 1520 signatures (7 July 2024).

https://www.change.org/p/challenge-jcq-to-abolish-the-process-of-issuing-raw-marks-in-art-subjects-to-students?signed=true&fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR3z6m0Qx05QSoME_nCzpwMpgll9z9e5jIrgvQ89QJyzPN7b4m-I-UbJIDg_aem_6WHbRzKqiJwsfL62drouZw

xvii. **22 May – 7 July 2024: The NSEAD Raw Marks survey takes place.**

The aims, findings and recommendations are shown in this report.

Introduction

The NSEAD Raw Marks to Students Survey, included:

Aims: The Raw Marks survey aimed to identify any impacts on teachers and learners of giving centre-assessed art and design GCSE, AS and A level raw marks to students.

When: The survey took place between: 22 May and 7 July 2024.

Survey participants: In total, 301 art and design teacher respondents took part in the survey. Of these 292 indicated that they taught art and design GCSE and 194 taught A level. There were 45 art and design teachers (15%); one technician and one principal. All other respondents described themselves as heads of art, arts curriculum leaders and/or assistant principals of schools.

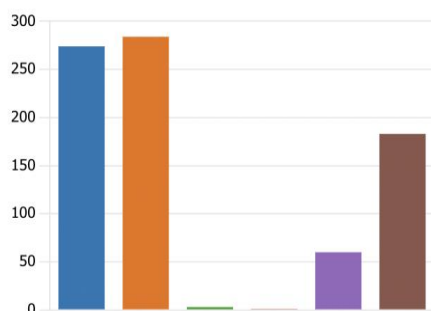
How: The survey was shared in the NSEAD member newsletter and in NSEAD Online (our NSEAD art educator forum). Both members and non-members contributed.

What: Microsoft *forms.office.com* was used to create and collate the survey.

Survey report summary: Results and findings

- **Survey respondents showed there is a high level of understanding regarding the benefits of the appeal process** – for example: ‘students could appeal the process if they feel it is unfair.’
- **The process of giving raw marks to students is causing undue stress:** 92% (274 teacher respondents out of 299) indicated that the process is causing ‘undue stress’ on students. Only 1.0%, (2 in total) of respondents indicated that the process is not causing undue stress on students. See graph below and appendix 3, Graph 1.

Graph 1: Results showing the impact of the process on students and teachers



Key

- It is causing undue stress on students (274 responded = 92%)
- It is causing undue stress on teachers (284 responded = 95%)
- It does not cause undue stress on students (3 responded = 1%)
- It does not cause undue stress on teachers (1 responded = 0.3%)
- It helps students to have an indication of what grade they will achieve (60 responded = 20%)
- It does not help students to have an indication of what grade they will achieve (183 responded = 61%)

- **For those candidates who had not achieved a high mark, the process of giving raw marks to students, especially impacts on their wellbeing:** Descriptions of the impact on students included: demoralising; disruptive on revision; demotivating; students felt angry, upset; disheartened, causing stress and unnecessary confusion and misunderstanding.
- **The process and its timing, mean that raw marks are often given out just before or even during students' other public exams:** Respondents described the process as causing stress and upset at a time when they should focus on their other subjects; and that the process can trigger anxiety just before or even on days when students are taking examinations. One respondent said: 'students are going into their written exams just after receiving their art raw mark, crying and trying to make sense of it.' Another wrote: 'I cannot express enough how damaging this process is for the students' wellbeing and ability to perform well in subsequent exams.'
- **Since the process was first introduced, grade boundaries from previous years are readily available online and can be easily accessed by students:** In line with some school policies, students will spend their GCSE and GCE course learning what grades they are predicted. When raw marks are given, mostly for the first time, students inevitably want to know what 'grade' the mark relates to. They will compare themselves to both their immediate peers and compare their mark or 'final' grade to past cohorts. The comparison is made despite grade boundaries being different year on year. This is causing many to misinterpret their marks. This was summarised by one respondent, 'students are unlikely to apply the weightings correctly, usually miscalculating a poor result [grade], leading to upset and panic.'
- **Some respondents believe that both predicted grades and the moderation process are ample opportunity to check assessments:** Respondents noted that if marks for coursework are deemed fair and rigorous, that these should provide the reassurances candidates need and that this gives ample opportunity and time to appeal. Respondents questioned the benefits of providing raw marks when external moderation is there to identify any inaccuracies with marking.

- **The process takes place ahead of moderation, without contextual national adjustments:** One respondent shared: 'It's very crushing and soul destroying for them – for two years hard work to be reduced to numbers. I would rather not put them through this process during their other exams.' Another said 'It causes stress and upset on both sides. Inaccurate because it is pre-moderator and pre-national adjustment.' Many respondents shared the view that if the moderation process is robust, this should offer adequate reassurances for students. Instead, there is a delay of months – between receiving the mark and confirming a possible grade, and a grade that will adjust in line with national standards. This delay is causing candidates unnecessary anxiety.
- **The process leads to a shortening of the period for coursework, standardisation and assessment:** This process and shortening of the schedule has put 'pressure' both on learners and teachers. Many respondents said that the process had reduced the time for marking, standardisation and for coursework. It was suggested that the externally set assignment should be released in January.
- **The process has in some schools and colleges (centres) impacted on up-take of art and design at A level:** The timing and sharing of lower marks, was described as a disincentive to opt for art and design at A level and in turn to pursue an art-related career. One respondent wrote: 'It has broken many working relationships with students and potentially affecting A level numbers because parents and pupils blame me.'
- **The process in some centres has resulted in a breakdown of trust between students and teachers:** Respondents recorded that giving 'final' marks to students breaks down trusting relationships that had grown. One respondent noted the number of appeals and others shared the impact on relationships: 'I am in an independent school and had six out of 24 pupils wanting to appeal despite being predicted for the past year exactly what the received.' And 'Instead of focusing on their other exams and revision, some launch appeals and get themselves worked up unnecessarily...The last communications we have with our students are about marks, rather than effort and focus on the journey. It's a disappointing way to end two years of study.'
- **The process has resulted in an additional workload for teachers:** The process impacts on staff time and admin. This differs according to the number of appeals undertaken. In some centres there are relatively large numbers of appeals. One respondent said: 'At my (private) school, parents are demanding phone calls and meetings, looking in some cases to blame me for their child's lack of work / engagement. Organising the review in one-person departments also takes time. Reviewing is very time-consuming.'
- **The process of giving raw marks to students is causing undue stress on teachers:** There were 284 (95%) survey respondents who said that the process is causing teachers undue stress (Graph 1, p.6). Respondents wrote: 'I had an appeal last year at my centre which created so much additional work and stress for me. This year I have been asked to check for another school. Again, very stressful.' Another respondent wrote: 'As teachers it's very stressful as students and parents question your marking, this puts on pressure and doesn't help with teachers' mental health. And 'Having taught for 40 years it's making me rethink whether teaching is worth doing anymore due to the stress it is putting me under, affecting both my mental and physical health!'
- **The process of reviewing teacher assessments is compromising for students:** A respondent described how the process places students in difficult positions: 'Students are not trained assessors, and so how can they appeal on any other basis other than they don't like the mark – they are not in the room when assessment takes place and so cannot know if assessment processes have been followed correctly or not – students are put in a difficult position with knowing what and how to appeal, even if they felt there was a legitimate basis for appeal.'

- **The breakdown of trust extends to the teacher/parent(s) and carer(s) relationships:** Respondents noted that parent(s) and carer(s) feel they need to support their children, even though they have no understanding of what they are appealing for. One respondent described the process as ‘Exceptionally distressing for me and I dread this time of year as parents get involved and it’s not just down to the students.’ Another respondent questioned the ethics of the process: ‘I refuse to tell them (students) last year’s grade boundaries, but they are easily accessed online. This leads to parents and students asking us to look for more marks which is unethical.’ Other respondents noted that the process impacts on teacher professionalism. One respondent wrote: ‘In 31 years of teaching, I have never felt so low about our role and the questioning of our professionalism.’
- **There has been inconsistent guidance for teachers and examiners to give raw marks to students. This results in some examination officers and some senior leadership teams (SLT) interpreting the information differently:** One respondent said: ‘We have had one appeal and although SLT have been supportive, they have also been confused by how to interpret the JCQ guidelines and how to formulate them into a clear school appeal policy for NEAs [non-exam assessment].’ Another respondent said: ‘Schools/exam officers need more help from JCQ as parents have complained to exam officers about the undue stress caused to their children while in the exam season.’
- **The system of raw marks to students could be exacerbating inequities across the sector:** Some respondents indicated that they teach in independent schools. Has data been collected to provide reassurances that there are no inequities in the review system; Does the ‘right’ to appeal, and have marks changed, favour families whose children are from specific socioeconomic groups.
- **The cost of the process and review is carried by schools, teachers and in some cases parent(s) and carer(s):** From 2017 onwards the process of giving marks and any subsequent reviews has been formally requested to be carried out by schools and teachers. The process is not always charged but usually takes place in the teachers’ own time. Others noted that there is indeed a cost to parent(s) and carer(s). Has the time and cost of the process been considered, and if so, what guidelines are in place to ensure adequate time is either given to teachers to undertake the process; or how do parent/carers who cannot afford the review fees, pay for a review? The survey report has raised concerning questions relating to potential inequities of the process. If the process is to continue, these concerns should be immediately addressed.

Raw marks to survey report recommendations

NSEAD recommends JCQ and Ofqual undertake an urgent independent consultation and impact study of the requirement that teachers give raw marks to art and design candidates. Given the evidence and findings in this report, NSEAD recommends that the process ends as soon as possible.

The proposed impact study would consult with art and design teachers from across the sector. It would examine relevant subject-specific data to identify if the process is meeting the needs of all young people regardless of school or background, and how the process, guidance, training and the procedure itself impacts on teachers and learners.

An urgent impact study of the process would answer the following questions:

- At a time when learners are entering further public examinations, does the process and timing of giving final marks impact on candidates' wellbeing and confidence? Of note, marks and in turn grades are increasingly easily accessed online from previous years. Are the benefits to students at this pivotal time worth the confusion and potential disappointment during their final examinations?
- Art and design and photography subjects are the only GCSE and GCEs that are 100 percent teacher marked and externally moderated. Has a subject-specific review of the process and its impact specifically on the workload of art and design/photography teachers been undertaken?
- What is the impact of the process on teacher wellbeing?
- The process has reduced the time for the art and design externally set assignments, and the time available for internal standardisation. Would increasing the time available for students to complete their ESA papers be better if brought forward?
- Are subject-specific raw marks to learners' guidance and/or training materials, using consistent instructions and accessible language?
- Have fees for reviews been passed on to parent(s) and carer(s); and if so, does this deter or prohibit assessment and marking reviews from taking place?
- Is the process harder to manage and less viable in small centres?
- Could a change in the process help maintain teacher-learner working relationships?
- Does the giving of marks before GCSEs impact on student uptake from GCSE, AS to A level art and design subjects?
- Does the art and design external moderation of the NEA components mitigate the need to give raw marks to students?
- What is the variability in the number of marking appeals across protected characteristics of students and their parent(s) and carer(s) across the sector? For example, are there variations in the number of marking reviews across socio-economic or minority groups; as well as state and independent sector schools?
- In 2016 when the measures were first rolled out, Ofqual noted they would need more information to assess the impact of this proposal (see page 1, v.). NSEAD asks, what information has Ofqual and JCQ gathered to ensure the process of giving raw marks to students was fit for purpose, and, has the process subsequently been reviewed and its impact fully understood?

Appendix: Survey questions, quotes and results

a. What are the benefits of giving raw marks to students?

There were 30 (10.5%) respondents that described one or more benefits of giving raw marks to students. Ninety percent of art and design respondents used this question to record concerns about the process. When answering this question 86 responses (30%) wrote 'none'.

Examples of benefits/suggestions – comments (quotes) included:

- They [students] are less likely to be surprised by their result in August.
- It manages expectations ahead of results day. In the case of genuine errors it can flag this up.
- My students felt better informed and part of the process when I assessed their work. We never had any appeals and had a smooth process in place.
- Challenge to favouritism and malpractice.
- They can appeal the process if they feel it is unfair.
- To avoid teachers penalising students for personal reasons.
- We moderate the coursework in March and return their marks then. This does seem to motivate them. Whilst we don't share grades, they do look up the previous year's boundaries and work out what they need to get for the ESA to achieve their preferred grade.
- For students with high marks it's a confidence boost and a day to say well done.
- So they [students] can see the progress made from their last assessment. We give scores during their course in a formative way, we don't share their final raw score data with them.
- With coursework marks they [students] have an induction of where they currently are. Does galvanise some!
- I don't see any [benefits] for the pupils... how about just coursework marks not ESA.

Respondents also used this section to record how the process gave cause for concern – comments (quotes) included:

- In all the years that we have been asked to do this, I can see no benefit for the student, it adds stress and confusion, at an already stressful time.
- None because there are so many factors that could change the marks.
- None - causes upset and is very confusing for pupils
- None, they [students] do not understand them [marks] and they receive them in the middle of the GCSE or A levels.
- None, it is damaging to students, particularly before they are about to sit other exams. It kills confidence and they do not even get time to breathe and exhale after completing the demanding two-year course, before they are hit with numbers/marks. Very damaging.
- I don't believe the system benefits the student. How can a student know if the marking process has been unorthodox or improper, when they aren't party to it.

b. What are the negatives of giving raw marks to students?

There were 296 respondents who responded to this question and identified negatives of giving raw marks to students. Of these, 107 responses are quoted (or part quoted) and summarised below. The responses are organised thematically:

Student wellbeing and other examinations

Confusing. Demoralising. Poor timing (at the same time as sat exams).

Students can be distressed and disheartened, affecting their current examinations negatively.

I would rather not put them through this process during their other exams.

Increased stress, shorter marking time, pointless appeals. Creating a very negative experience for those with lower marks, before they even start their other exams.

The students had the marks in the middle of exams, causing disappointment and upset.

The students are given the marks sometimes days before other exams. This can cause immense stress and upset at a time when they should be calm and focused on their other subjects. I have never seen a positive situation coming from this process.

Increased risk of triggering episodes of poor mental health.

Opens up room for lots of upset – they are bothered about grades, not the assessment and moderation process.

Lots of unnecessary tears, disruption on revision, worry on things they cannot do anything about.

It's demoralising and a huge distraction for the students whilst they are completing their exams.

Demotivated, angry, upset, confused either when given marks if they are low or on results day if they are moderated down.

Some of our students are particularly stressed and worried about their exams and knowing these results is playing on their minds at a time when they need / want to focus on revision.

Demoralising. It is impossible to justify to students the reasons for doing this.

Many kids are sitting their other examinations now often the next day with heightened anxiety and stress from these results.

It's a horrible time frame too as it's in the middle of public exams.

Really badly timed for them [students] in the middle of GCSEs.

It also has to happen at the same time as they are preparing and sitting other external exams so they are already feeling vulnerable and more emotional.

It's the timing that is the problem! It comes at the time when the students just start their other exams. Even if students have been predicted lower grades, it still is a very unpleasant situation to have to give them their raw scores at this very stressful time.

The significant delay (months) between receiving the mark and confirming the grade causes unnecessary anxiety.

Creates confrontation with students who haven't done as well as they thought – students become angry and upset. This is detrimental to teacher and student relationships and detrimental to the mental health of both students and staff.

It causes anxiety because they don't understand how the raw score is calculated into a grade. The length of time that they have to wait to get their grade increases this anxiety.

Adds to stress levels of staff and students. Makes poorly performing students panic about other exams led to one student not sitting rest of her A levels as she'd become so anxious.

Can cause major damage for those with mental health needs.

They [students] think it equates to a fail in some cases, and this could be just before they head into an afternoon GCSE exam with feelings of failure.

As these are given while the pupil is on study leave it is difficult to manage their expectation and understanding remotely, this can create stress / anxiety when they are preparing for examinations.

One of my students had a meltdown seeing his mark was lower than he expected and walked out – meaning he missed exam lessons.

Disappointed and stressed students when they are in the middle of public exams. Huge amount of appeals at my school (private) and parents demanding phone calls and meetings, looking in some cases to blame staff for their child's lack of work / engagement.

Instead of focusing on their other exams and revision, some launch appeals and get themselves worked up unnecessarily... The last communications we have with our students are about marks, rather than effort and focus on the journey. It's a disappointing way to end two years of study.

Students search for last year's grade boundaries

Ending the course with confusion, students unlikely to apply the weightings correctly and usually miscalculating a poor result, upset and panic.

Raw marks and the process used to award them are frequently misinterpreted by students and parents. Has the potential to sour the whole course.

They check boundaries and can feel disheartened in the middle of the exam season, for some students this can really impact their confidence.

Students look up boundaries to try and establish a grade estimate which can be misleading.

It's ambiguous and causes unnecessary anxiety. Students then try to guess what grade they will get, which again, is meaningless!

Students compare to each other ranking themselves and assuming the worse, making the mark into a percentage and then wanting to know grade boundaries, or looking online for previous boundaries. At a time when they are doing other exams this adds extra stress.

Ending the course with confusion, students unlikely to apply the weightings correctly and usually miscalculating a poor result, leading to upset and panic.

Undue stress as they can't change the marks at a time when they are concentrating on all their other subjects. They don't know the grade boundaries so it can give false hope if they work on old ones or vice versa.

Demotivation and added stress at a time when they are under massive pressure. It is also too late for them to act upon it and too early for them to know their grade prompting unhelpful rumination.

It can serve to demoralise students or create a false impression of their grade.

Students feeling disappointed about a final mark when they don't actually know what grade that will equate to. Students complaining to SLT.

Students turn to the internet for answers which doesn't take into account the 60/40% weighting so they make wrong assumptions. Parents then contact you, reacting to their distressed child only to be told the same, generic feedback. So, relationships that have been built over the years become strained during the exam period when students are at their most vulnerable.

The process is pre-moderation, without context and is causing confusion

Unnecessary confusion and misunderstanding at a time when they're trying to focus on revision and are under huge pressure. We don't discuss grade boundaries, cannot give details, work hasn't been moderated, the whole thing lacks any context. It's completely meaningless.

It's very crushing and soul destroying for them – for two years hard work to be reduced to numbers. I would rather not put them through this process during their other exams.

Given that the grade boundaries shift and the marks are subject to external moderation giving out the raw marks seems futile as they are meaningless until the grade boundaries are applied.

It causes stress and upset on both sides. Inaccurate because it is pre-moderator and pre-national adjustment. Peers compare with each other.

Ending the course with confusion, students unlikely to apply the weightings correctly and usually miscalculating a poor result, upset and panic.

Students already have their predicted grades, so providing them their final mark does not hold any purpose prior to moderation.

What benefit is there to providing raw marks when external moderation is there to identify any inaccuracies with marking giving raw marks to students/parents is allowing for teacher integrity to be questioned.

Students are not trained assessors and so how can they appeal on any other basis other than they don't like the mark - they are not in the room when assessment takes place and so cannot know if assessment processes have been followed correctly or not - students are put in a difficult position of knowing what and how to appeal, even if they felt there was a legitimate basis for appeal.

Moderation process in place to assure accurate assessment so why the need to give pupils raw marks?

No matter how this information is presented to the students, and let's be honest there's no clear guidance so every school does it differently if at all, they will always try and figure out their grade and compare themselves to others.

Timing, coursework and assessment schedules have changed

This appeal process negatively impacts the amount of time students have making work for the NEA 2 and time teachers have for marking the work.

We have less time to finish the course and for Component 2 this means two weeks shorter, at least, as we have to allow the appeals window... This means marks inevitably go out just as students are starting/ have started the main exam season. If their [art] class teacher also happens to be their form tutor this can have an even greater impact.

Shortened marking window, had to have all marking done over 3 weeks before the deadline for marks submission, because of the appeals process, meaning we had to mark for 25 hours total over 2.5 days to complete the process. Made the marking rushed, so more likely to make mistakes.

Meaningless – increases workload – makes meeting deadlines unmanageable.

It puts added pressure on teachers to turn marking around quickly and this could effect accuracy of marking.

It also impacts of internal deadlines as we have to standardise work earlier to allow for the appeal process.

The significant delay (months) between receiving the mark and confirming the grade causes unnecessary anxiety.

Takes a lot of admin time for staff and reduces the time for marking by 10 days.

It is traumatic for staff and actually brings the moderation process forward taking away practical time from students who could use the last couple of weeks adding final touches to coursework to improve grades.

If they [candidates] had concerns over your teaching and marking process this should be raised sooner and not the week before you are submitting marks to the exam board.

High volume of parent/carer complaints. Students upset and stressed whilst in the midst of their public exams. Having to give 7-14 days for students to appeal means that moderation and, therefore, the exams are moved earlier allowing for less preparation time.

The process has costs – financially for some families and in time for teachers

Expense to parents who then pay for a review because they don't understand it; Parents and students asking us to look for more marks which is unethical; Who pays for externally qualified people to independently review marks – are we all doing this on a goodwill basis and giving up our time at already busy times of the year? Timescales are tight meaning many teachers work far beyond directed time and in holiday time.

The process is impacting on uptake of A level art and design / photography

Students are turned off taking the subject at A level due to ruined relationships.

It damages relationships, as we attempt to recruit A Level students or encourage those of lower abilities to pursue careers in art.

This can affect our numbers opting [for art & design/photography] at A level as they can be upset with their result.

Compromises achievement of completing the course

Compromises what can be a valuable/meaningful time of course completion and collective achievement/celebration.

Diverts any reflection, and personal success is completely overshadowed.

Relationship building and a breakdown of trust between students and teachers

It adds stress to the students and teachers, it breaks down trusting relationships that have been built up over years.

It derails the teacher-student relationship.

I find it just completely destroys the relationships we have been building over the years.

It can destroy confidence and break down relationships with students and teachers.

Breakdown of relationships and trust of teachers and students. What has been built up over the course of the GCSE. Upsetting for all involved.

It has upset myself, my students and parents so much that after 40 years [of teaching] I am thinking of quitting a job I have always felt so passionate about.

Teacher workload is increased and negatively impacts on wellbeing

As teachers it's very stressful as students and parents question your marking, this puts on pressure and doesn't help with teachers' mental health.

Teacher has to find someone to come and check the process, get everything out, get similar candidates out to compare. I had an appeal last year at my centre which created so much additional work and stress for me. This year I have been asked to check for another school. Again, very stressful.

I get very anxious in the lead up to giving out marks as you never know which students and parents are going to complain to the head and it totally knocks your confidence and undermines you.

Stress for teachers, rushing to get things done, fear of challenges, difficult conversations, questioning professional judgements.

It's very emotional for both the teacher and the students, especially when you know that the students are disappointed.

This has led to us have students in at weekends to make up for the time reduction.

Teacher integrity compromised

Gives students opportunity to question our professional integrity and assessment.

Undermines the professionalism of teachers. Students should already have enough of an indication of where they are at with previous feedback.

The onus is on art teachers to 'find' someone at another school to check work if there are appeals. Why is this our job?

Undermines the time, experience and expertise of art teachers causing poor mental health in a challenging career as it is.

The aggressive emails received from parents. Questioning teacher's professionalism.

Other subjects in my school do not even do this when meant to.

I am in an Independent school and had 6 out of 24 pupils wanting to appeal despite being predicted for the past year exactly what they received. It has broken many working relationships with students and potentially affecting A level numbers because parents and pupils blame me.

Parent teacher relationship

Parents feel they need to support their children, even though they have no understanding of what they are even appealing. Causes a rift in pupil/teacher/parent relations and serves no purpose given moderators have not been into school at this point.

I refuse to tell them last year's grade boundaries but they are easily accessed online. This leads to parents and students asking us to look for more marks which is unethical.

Parents can be unreasonable and sometimes even abusive about the marks that we give.

I have been so stressed with students getting so upset and wanting to appeal, but then when they realise it was the process, they end up upset and retracting or worse still, appeal and then realise the mark was correct. This has led to a breakdown in the relationship with parents, with parents contacting school to complain why was their child given these results when they had their other exams and now could not revise due to being so upset. It's a total cruel and pointless exercise!

Parents have complained about the undue stress caused to their children while in the exam season.

Unmotivate them [students]. Hostility from parents & students, who refer to last year's boundaries and realise they are not achieving the grade they want, then issuing formal complaints, professionalism questioned and accused of being biased, therefore added workload when asked to re-assess.

Moderation and appeals process is undermined

It undermines the bigger picture exam board process of the moderator and the national adjustment to the national standard.

The moderator comes out to the centre to ensure the marks are in line with national standards, so why the need to give students their marks when they would be effectively marked twice.

If my marks are incorrect the moderator would change them and so the process is already checked and balanced, there is no advantage in a middle person reviewing the marks or the process.

A lot of admin involved. Sourcing teachers from outside of the school to do reviews is tricky. No financial remuneration to do the review.

Why allow them to appeal against our moderation process that will be monitored by the exam boards anyway?

Guidance is not consistent

No matter how this information is presented to the students, and let's be honest there's no clear guidance so every school does it differently, if at all, they will always try and figure out their grade and compare themselves to others.

The directive from JCQ is vague and is not consistently applied by all centres / exam boards leading to unfair conditions.

No clear guidance of how to conduct the process to ensure consistency across exam boards/schools.

We have had one appeal and although SLT have been supportive, they have also been confused by how to interpret the JCQ guidelines and how to formulate them into a clear school appeal policy for NEAs.

Schools don't feedback marks consistently because the guidance is not clear enough. Vague JCQ directions with timelines, what constitutes acceptable reasons for a review, what proof a student could have against their centre?!

No standardisation in how to deliver the grades to students and info to give. Exams officers ill informed.

The emphasis should be on SLT to check the process.

I don't agree that both portfolio and ESA should be sent home. The ESA is still concluded as an exam, in exam conditions. That mark should not be shared.

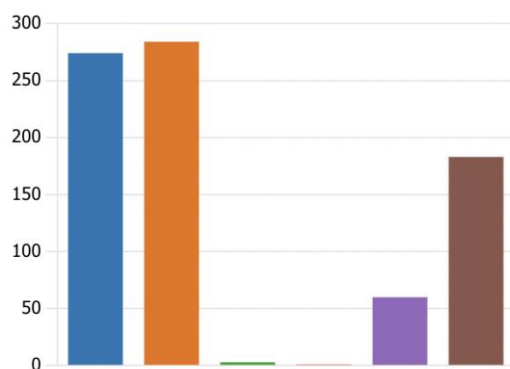
Schools/exam officers need more help from JCQ - Parents have complained about the undue stress caused to their children while in the exam season.

One hundred percent NEA

No other subject is expected to hand out marks for the whole course. I can appreciate why NEA marks are given out for Coursework, but JCQ really don't seem to have understood the impact on art and design. It is a really unique situation that needs rethinking.

c. The impact of the process on teachers and students:

Respondents (299 art and design teachers) ticked the statements that they AGREED with:



Graph 1: Results showing the impact of the process on students and teachers.

Key

- It is causing undue stress on students (274 responded = 92%)
- It is causing undue stress on teachers (284 responded = 95%)

- It does not cause undue stress on students (3 responded = 1%)
- It does not cause undue stress on teachers (1 responded = 0.3%)
- It helps students to have an indication of what grade they will achieve (60 responded = 20%)
- It does not help students to have an indication of what grade they will achieve (183 responded = 61%)

This indicates that for both students (92%) and teachers (95%) the process is causing undue stress. Respondents mostly (61%) indicated that the process did not indicate or help students know what grade they would achieve.

d. Respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like to add:

Respondents (134 art and design teachers) used this section for further comments, negatives, positives and suggestions

Staff are insufficiently trained in handling this situation and it causes unnecessary stress for all parties.

I also teach DT sometimes, and their situation is even worse because they have the written exam worth 50%. I already know of two GCSE students this year who have said it's not worth sitting the final exam because of their low NEA mark so aren't going to bother - you can't tell me that's in the best interest of the student!

Examples include students going into their written exams after just receiving their art raw mark and crying and trying to make sense of it.

Being the only other GCSE art teacher in my centre I have to plead to other centres 50km away to come look at appealed work. What is the point?

Having taught for 40 years it's making me rethink whether teaching is worth doing anymore due to the stress it is putting me under, affecting both my mental and physical health!

Single person department – complicates further.

Finding time and finding a suitable person to review marks is tricky for small centres.

Finding a good reviewer if you are a small department [single person or all teachers have standardised work] can be really tricky. All very stressful – every part of it!

The system is broken; it makes internal moderation pointless before the examiner visit.

We have been told that students can appeal the process and NOT the mark awarded. This is in my specification booklet and was discussed at length during standardisation. However, in the JCQ document outlining the procedure it refers throughout the document that the student can appeal against the mark.

The students absolutely treat this as their art and design results day. It doesn't serve the purpose it was set up for.

Exceptionally distressing for me and I dread this time of year as parents get involved and it's not just down to the students.

This is the first year where it has really shown its negative side. Student questioning the marks. Comparing theirs with other students and arguments between each other. It has caused major

anxiety on my part and impacted my sleep and attitude in school. It was quite a confrontational time this year.

I cannot express enough how damaging this process is for the students' wellbeing and ability to perform well in subsequent exams.

We are the only subject that is 100% NEA and therefore students think they can predict with the availability of previous grade boundaries on the internet.

Pupils are given multiple stages of assessment feedback throughout the course. This final demand is futile at a time when the pupils need to be focused elsewhere.

The school should know how their staff are moderating and standardising.

The process seems to act to undermine the accurate, impartial application of the assessment criteria and the moderation process.

The entire process is having such a detrimental impact upon all stakeholders.

I have supported other smaller schools with their marking, with four teachers checking and coming to an agreement for students to then appeal.

In 31 years of teaching, I have never felt so low about our role and the questioning of our professionalism.

I have worked at the school for 28 years and we have always completed rigorous moderation. Having to give marks back to students has not changed my process, it just gives extra work to teachers and extra stress.

Positive comments:

I think it's valuable for students to know what the process is when their teachers mark their work. i.e. scrutinise over 50 sets of exemplar work from exam board, marked work, standardised work, rank ordered mark, compared all borderline marks to exemplar work and each other.

To be honest I feel if you regularly mark the work throughout the grade/mark shouldn't be a surprise to them. Surely they know roughly where they are.

Solutions: Assessment and procedures (quotes)

Internal checks should be done before grades are submitted; not relying on a student choosing to challenge during a time when they should be fully focused on their exams.

It questions your ability as a professional, it would be better for Ofqual to make mandatory training in assessment.

The school should know how their staff are moderating and standardising.

Just giving a clear explanation of the moderation and standardisation process to parents and pupils to sign. Then SLT checks what has been said has been done – this would be enough.

The appeal process could be changed, whereby if an individual student appealed their grade in August, then just that one student's work gets looked at either by AQA or an experienced teacher from another centre. The entire cohort would not need to be re moderated.

It should be made a requirement that all schools should be instructed to have the teaching staff off timetable together for at least a full day to ensure that they mark the full cohort together to ensure that the moderation process is fair and investment in terms of time given in one chunk to enable effective comparison and rigorous assessment.

We need the boards to provide firmer guidance on this to support or argue that moderation needs time.

We are holding on to the work until Oct 31. Why can't the appeals be done with everything else after the exams are over and when other subjects are potentially appealing?

I have found letter templates from NSEAD (NSEAD Online) helpful. Communicating out to students using adapted templates (via email) has reduced the number of review requests (none in past two years).

I also think it is important to communicate the process to teachers and its purpose as well as give them more comprehensive support with it (ie. templates that can be used by individual subjects that relate to that subject's assessment model, student and parent friendly materials to help them communicate the process in a way that does not open them up to unnecessary appeals and additional workload).

Acknowledgements

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