**To: All MPs in England**

10 August 2023

Dear Colleague,

***GCSE, AS and A level, T level and other vocational and technical qualification (VTQ) exam results 2023***

I am grateful for all the support schools and colleges have given students sitting exams this year. Results days this year are Thursday 17 August for AS, A levels and T Levels, and Thursday 24 August for GCSEs. Students will also be receiving results for level 3 VTQs by 17 August and level 2 VTQs by 24 August. You may receive queries from your constituents, so I am writing to make you aware of the arrangements for results and higher education admissions this year.

This letter provides a summary of the key points to be aware of. Further information can be found on DfE’s [website](https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/category/exams-and-qualifications/), and in Ofqual’s guides for [students](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-student-guide-2023/ofqual-student-guide-2023) and for [schools and colleges](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-for-schools-and-colleges-2023/guide-for-schools-and-colleges-2023). Ofqual and UCAS have also published a joint [letter to students](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-letter-to-students-from-ofqual-and-ucas/a-letter-to-students-from-ofqual-and-ucas).

***Approach to grading for GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2023***

Ofqual announced last September that GCSEs, AS and A levels are returning to pre-pandemic grading this summer, with protection built in to recognise the disruption that students have faced. This means that senior examiners will make allowances where national performance is lower than before the pandemic due to disruption. Therefore, a typical student who would have achieved, for example, a B grade in A level geography before the pandemic, will be just as likely to get a B in geography in 2023. The return to pre-pandemic grading means that national results will be lower than last summer. It will be most meaningful to compare results to 2019, the last year that summer exams were taken before the pandemic. As in any year, results for individual schools and colleges will vary, but the approach to grading means that results for individual schools and colleges are highly likely to be lower than last summer. Further information is available in Ofqual’s blog [10 things to know about GCSE, AS and A level grades](https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2023/07/10/exam-results-2023-10-things-to-know-about-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades/). 

***Vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs)***

As outlined in Ofqual’s blog on [vocational and technical qualifications grading in 2023](https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2023/07/10/vocational-and-technical-qualifications-grading-in-2023/), the return to formal assessments means that national outcomes for vocational and technical qualifications are also expected to be lower than outcomes in 2022. Awarding organisations will expect broadly the same quality of work at each grade as they did before the pandemic. However, where possible, senior examiners will monitor for evidence of disruption and consider it when setting grade boundaries.

Following the issues with some late and incorrect vocational and technical qualification results last summer, Ofqual published a robust [action plan](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vocational-and-technical-qualification-results-action-plan) to support the timely delivery of level 3 results used for progression to higher education in 2023. Around 2,500 schools and colleges in England have confirmed which of their students expect to get level 3 VTQ results this summer. There have, however, been examples of late responses which might jeopardise students receiving their results on time. Ofqual has confirmed that awarding organisations are following up with a small number of schools and colleges so students can still receive results by results day.

***T levels***

T Levels are new, rigorous, technical alternatives to A levels. Broadly equivalent in size to three A levels and developed with employers, they are designed to meet the needs of industry and prepare students for skilled employment, higher education or a higher or degree level apprenticeship. This will be the second year of T Level results. More than 3,500 students will be receiving their final results across seven T Levels, with more than 7,500 students getting the results from their first-year assessments ahead of completion next year across 16 T Levels. Although Ofqual has asked awarding organisations to be flexible in awarding T Level Technical Qualification grades to reflect that they are new, the standards expected are deliberately rigorous and demanding. 2023 will also be the first year that Technical Qualifications in T Levels are based fully on externally set assessments (they previously included teacher assessed grades). It will therefore be important not to compare them with last year’s results or other existing vocational qualifications. We remain highly committed to T Levels, with 18 pathways available for young people this summer as new T Levels in Agriculture, Land Management and Production and Legal Services join our existing portfolio.

***Higher education and alternative options***

Students can have confidence that getting into higher education is a fair process. Universities are aware of the approach to grading in 2023 and took this into account when making offers – as they do every year. The overall number of university places available is also not governed by the number of top grades. So, there will be plenty of high-quality options for students and grading arrangements will not affect this.

It is very common for students to not achieve their predicted grades but still be offered a higher education place. In 2019, for English 18-year-old applicants with a minimum of three A Level prediction, only 20% met or exceed their predicted grades. However, for the same group, 88% were accepted into a UK higher education provider and of those 58% were accepted to their firm first choice. If students do not secure their firm or insurance offers, support is available to guide them through clearing, where many suitable courses may be available. While a degree can open many doors, there are lots of choices for students, whether they want to train on the job through an apprenticeship, or continue studying at higher levels, including through Higher Technical Qualifications. Apprenticeships offer a high-quality route into over 670 occupations, spanning levels 2 – 7 (from GCSE equivalent up to master’s degree level). They are employer led, offering jobs with training in 15 key sectors including construction, care, digital and creative and design. Higher Technical Qualifications are level 4 and 5 qualifications, such as HNDs and Foundation Degrees, that have been independently approved as providing the skills that employers need across a range of specialist roles including nursing associate, quantity surveyor and software developer. There will be support available for students to discuss their next steps. For those who have studied at school or college, their teachers will be on hand to help give advice and guidance. The [National Careers Service](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/) also provides free and impartial careers advice, information and guidance and runs a dedicated exam results helpline for all students taking qualifications.

I hope this information will be helpful for you and your constituents and I wish all students the best of luck with their exam results and next steps.

Yours sincerely,

A signature of a snake

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**Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP**

**Secretary of State for Education**