

How does a student appeal an A Level trade?

Ofqual issued guidance for appeals based on Mock exams on Saturday, only to withdraw it again late in the evening that day. It put out a terse statement saying "Earlier today we published information about mock exam results in appeals. This policy is being reviewed by the Ofqual Board and further information will be published in due course."

The news programmes I heard on Sunday morning said no Ofqual spokes person was available to clarify. This was surprising considering the importance of their late night announcement and the great interest and concern it aroused in many students, teachers, and their families. Ofqual according to its published Organogram employs a Director of Communications supported by 10 people. It is odd that none of these were available on such an important occasion. If the Board had decided to overrule the staff after they had published some work, then it is surprising the Board itself did not appoint someone to put its case. The Chairman for example could have offered himself for interview.

Ofqual according to its website has 217 people in important posts on the Organogram to perform its role of regulating and supervising the Examining Boards with a view to maintaining the standards of qualifications. The inability on this occasion to agree a policy on appeals with the government and to implement it may have something to do with the different senior people and teams involved in policy. There is a Director of Policy and Strategic relations with six staff reporting. There is an Associate Director of Strategic Policy and Risk with seven staff, and a Director of Strategic Relations with eight staff, for example. The Board should set out the strategy on the advice of the Chief Regulator and senior management team. It is difficult to know what all these people do and how it contributes to maintaining the standards of qualifications. In the end standards come down to a mixture of judgement by the Board and Chief Regulator, and good data from the Examining Boards.

Ofqual owes it to students to move quickly to offer them a realistic appeals system to deal with injustices and mistakes thrown up by the current surrogate evaluations for the absence of exams. It is certainly not fair to keep students who feel they have been wrongly downgraded guessing about how and when they can appeal.