

A guide to enquiries about results and appeals

It is important that our examiners mark accurately and consistently so that candidates receive the correct grades. We achieve this through careful selection, training and standardisation of our examiners. In spite of these rigorous processes, occasionally something can go wrong. This is why we have an 'enquiries about results' (EAR) service. This information sheet provides guidance about how the process works.

How do we make sure that examiners mark accurately in the first place?

At the start of marking, examiners will receive training on the mark scheme. This happens for every exam series because question papers and their mark schemes are different from one series to the next.

Once examiners have been trained on how to use the mark scheme they will mark a sample of scripts that will be checked by their team leader. They will receive feedback on this marking and will only be allowed to start marking once their team leader is satisfied that they have a sound understanding of the mark scheme and can apply this understanding to a range of exam papers. Examiners must show that they can mark a range of answers of differing levels as well as answers taking unusual approaches.

Examiners have their work monitored throughout the marking period so that we are sure they are continuing to apply the mark scheme correctly. Examiners are in regular contact with their team leader who offers guidance and checks their marking.

Once candidates have received their results

When to request an enquiry about results

We offer enquiry about results services so that Centres can ask us to check the results for particular candidates when they think that we have issued an inappropriate grade. The services allow concerns to be raised, and give us the opportunity to investigate potential errors and correct them.

We would encourage Centres to think carefully about whether there is a problem with a candidate's grade before submitting an enquiry. You should not request an enquiry merely because a candidate is close to the threshold for achieving a higher grade.

Enquiries about results have to be made by the Centre, not by the candidate or by their parent. There is a time limit within which an enquiry about results must be made.

If you think there is a problem:

Enquiries about results can be requested for individual exam papers. The range of services includes:

- clerical re-check
- review of marking
- re-moderation of coursework
- return of candidate's work.

What happens when an enquiry about result is submitted?

When we have received a request for an enquiry about result we will send the candidate's work to another examiner so that there is an independent review of the marking of the work. The reviewing examiner will have been through the same training as all the other examiners marking the paper and will have marked many candidate answers.

We always correct any administrative marking errors that are found. Marking errors which we will always rectify include incorrect addition of marks, errors in transfer of marks from exam paper to computer screen, and partly unmarked scripts.

We will always correct errors in the application of the mark scheme where the marking is objective, and there is demonstrable evidence that the original examiner has not applied the mark scheme correctly. However, some questions are more subjective to mark than others. In cases where there is a difference in the mark awarded by the original examiner compared with the mark awarded by the reviewing examiner, and where this difference is due to a matter of judgement rather than a demonstrable misapplication of the mark scheme, we will not always amend the original mark. Our decision on whether to amend the mark or not will be taken after considering the extent to which the judgement by the examiners differs.

There is a fee for each enquiry about result. If we find an error in the candidate's grade we will refund this fee.

Appeal process

If no errors have been identified following the enquiry about results but the Centre still thinks there is a problem with the candidate's grade, there is an appeal process.

The appeal process is not recourse to another opinion about the candidate's work, but is a way to challenge us if you think that we have not followed appropriate procedures.

The appeal process will focus on our procedures, specifically on whether we:

- used procedures which are consistent with our Code of Practice, which is available on our website
- applied our internal procedures properly and fairly in arriving at our judgements.

The Centre submits the appeal on behalf of the candidate. The process will not include the further review of the candidate's work.

There are two stages to the appeal process:

Stage 1

A senior member of our staff will consider the appeal, focusing on whether Cambridge procedures were followed correctly. The appeal will either be upheld or rejected. This stage takes up to 21 days from when the appeal has been received.

Stage 2

If the appeal is not upheld at Stage 1, the Centre may choose to proceed to Stage 2 by writing to Cambridge within 14 days of the outcome of the Stage 1 appeal.

At Stage 2 the Centre's case is considered by a committee of independent members, who are not Cambridge employees. Members of the Appeals Committee will not have had any previous involvement in the case. They are not selected on the basis of their subject expertise, and it is not within their remit to form an opinion about the quality of candidates' work or to require marks or grades to be changed. The Committee can, however, require further work to be carried out by Cambridge.

The Stage 2 appeal will take the form of a re-examination of the evidence, documents, comments and reports seen at Stage 1 of the appeals process. The appeal will either be upheld or rejected and the outcome will be given within 28 days of receiving the Stage 2 appeal.

The outcome of a Stage 2 appeal is final and we will not enter into further communication after we have communicated the outcome of the appeal.

There is a fee for Stage 1 and Stage 2 appeals per enquiry. If we find an error in the candidate's grade we will refund this fee.

Learn more! For more information please visit www.cie.org.uk or contact Customer Services on +44 (0)1223 553554 or email info@cie.org.uk