

## NAHT Cymru statement RE qualification grading

NAHT is the UK's largest professional association for school leaders. We represent more than 30,000 head teachers, executive heads, CEOs, deputy and assistant heads, vice principals and school business leaders. Our members work across: the early years, primary, special and secondary schools; independent schools; sixth form and FE colleges; outdoor education centres; pupil referral units, social services establishments and other educational settings.

In addition to the representation, advice and training that we provide for existing senior leaders, we also support, develop and represent the senior leaders of the future, through NAHT Edge, the middle leadership section of our association. We use our voice at the highest levels of government to influence policy for the benefit of leaders and learners everywhere.

NAHT Cymru thanks for the committee for considering our response to the situation regarding the grades process in Wales.

From the outset, we raised concerns with the standardisation process, namely the weight given to the past performance of a school and the little value placed on teachers' professional opinions. We felt that past performance data would have a detrimental impact on learners who were performing well at an underperforming school and that schools who, for example, had seen a change of leadership in recent years, would again be negatively affected. We also felt that more trust should have been placed in the views of the people who know their students best, their teachers. Those concerns were raised during meetings with Qualifications Wales, WJEC and Welsh Government officials.

On the eve of A level grades being published in Wales, changes were made to mitigate against the issues with the algorithm used and the 'no detriment' floor and widening of the appeals process. These changes were announced after NAHT Cymru questioned why CAG were not going to be used, given the identified flaws in the process, only to be told that CAG has 'greater unreliability' than the process being used. NAHT Cymru believes that judgement to be an insult on the profession and completely uncalled for.

Once results were made public, it was clear that the mitigating measures brought in by Welsh Government were still not going to go far enough to redress the situation and again NAHT Cymru publicly called for CAG to be used.

The announcement yesterday (Monday, July 17) that all qualification grades this summer will revert to CAG is welcomed news. In the current circumstances it is right to trust the professional judgement of the people who know their students best.

However, we do not yet know what this delay will mean for students who have already missed out on their first choice of university. This will undoubtedly load more and more difficulty onto universities and their capacity to meet all the demand for places that will now inevitably come their way. For them, the problem is far from over.

We appreciate that this was always going to be a difficult time and there is no perfect method by which to award grades. However, taking this decision now will mean students expecting their GCSE results can have confidence that they will not experience the same unfairness or disadvantage as their older peers.

We urge Welsh Government to continue to have the confidence in their educational professionals in Wales. During the pandemic, teachers have stepped up to the challenge of supporting their learners, staff and extended school families during incredibly difficult times. They have proved their worth and their integrity and professional judgement should not be questioned to this extent in the future.

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