Exams Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Dibden Park School

Document control	Details
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Created	20th October 2026
Review	20th October 2027

Our vision

Dibden Park School supports every child and young person to feel safe, be heard, discover their worth, develop their strengths and create a limitless future.



Respect | Engage | Belong | Independence | Ambition

Learn Now, Succeed Together, Grow Forever

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1. Purpose and scope

This procedure explains how a student or parent/carer can raise a concern about the school's administration or delivery of examinations and assessments, and how a student can appeal specified assessment decisions. It applies to qualifications entered through Dibden Park School and should be read alongside the current Assessment Policy, the Outcomes First Group (OFG) Complaints Policy and the relevant awarding organisation requirements.

The school's vision is to help every child and young person feel safe, be heard, discover their worth, develop their strengths and create a limitless future. This procedure reflects our values of Respect, Engage, Belong, Independence and Ambition. Students will be listened to, supported to explain their concern, and given information in a format and communication style they can understand.

A complaint about the way an examination or qualification is administered is different from an appeal against a mark, grade, access arrangement, special consideration or post-results decision. Staff will help the student use the correct route. This procedure does not replace safeguarding, whistleblowing, data protection or the OFG complaints process.

2. Who is responsible

- The Headteacher, as Head of Centre, is accountable for compliance with awarding organisation and JCQ requirements and makes or oversees centre decisions under this procedure.
- The Examinations Officer coordinates entries, examination administration, candidate information, access to post-results services, records and communication with awarding organisations.
- The Headteacher will appoint an appropriately competent reviewer who was not involved in the original decision and has no conflict of interest. Where appropriate, the reviewer will be from another school or an independent professional.
- Where the Headteacher made or was involved in the decision, the concern will be referred through the current OFG Complaints Policy or to the governor/group representative designated under that policy. A person must not investigate their own decision.
- Subject staff will provide relevant assessment records and cooperate with a review, but will not review their own marking or decision.

3. Raising a complaint about exams or assessment administration

Examples include concerns about examination arrangements, communication, conduct of an examination, access arrangements being implemented, assessment administration, or the handling of a request. A concern about teaching quality alone is not an appeal against an assessment mark, although it may be raised through the school's complaints process.

1. Raise the concern as soon as possible with the Examinations Officer or Headteacher. A student may raise it verbally or in writing and may ask a parent/carer, trusted adult or member of staff to help. The school will record a verbal concern and check that the student agrees with the record.
2. If it is not resolved informally, submit a formal complaint to the Headteacher through the school office or the route published in the OFG Complaints Policy. Include what happened, when it happened, the qualification or examination involved, the impact on the student and the outcome sought. The school will offer reasonable communication support.
3. The complaint will be acknowledged and investigated under the current OFG Complaints Policy. The investigator will be impartial, gather relevant evidence and give the student or parent/carer an opportunity to explain the concern. Where an awarding organisation must be notified, the Head of Centre will do so promptly.
4. The written outcome will explain the findings, any action taken and how to request the next stage under the OFG Complaints Policy. Exam-related deadlines will be considered throughout so that an internal complaint does not prevent a time-critical appeal or post-results request.

If the concern involves possible malpractice, a breach of examination security, or a safeguarding issue, staff must also follow the relevant OFG Malpractice or Safeguarding Policy. A safeguarding concern must be reported immediately through the school's safeguarding procedure.

4. Appealing a centre-assessed mark or grade

For GCSE, GCE and other qualifications where the awarding organisation requires this process, a student may request a review of a centre-assessed mark before the mark is submitted to the awarding organisation. The school will tell students the mark, the relevant component deadline and how to request a review. Requests must be made by the deadline given for that assessment so the review can be completed before the awarding organisation deadline.

1. The student may ask for copies of the marked work, the mark breakdown and the assessment criteria or mark scheme, subject to any restrictions needed to protect original or confidential material. For JCQ GCSE/GCE non-examination assessments, the school will normally allow at least five working days for the student to consider the material before deciding whether to request a review.

2. The written request should identify the assessment, the mark being queried and the grounds for review, such as an administrative error, a failure to apply the published criteria, or an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement. A review is not a re-mark on the basis of preference or a complaint about teaching.
3. A competent reviewer with no prior involvement and no personal interest will check the relevant evidence and whether the published criteria and the school's standardisation arrangements were applied correctly. The original mark may stay the same, increase or decrease, in accordance with the applicable rules.
4. The school will provide the outcome and reasons in writing before marks are submitted. The mark submitted to the awarding organisation may still change through external moderation. If the student disagrees with the review outcome, they may ask for the review process to be checked under the OFG Complaints Policy. A person not involved in the original decision or review will consider the concern. The centre will notify the awarding organisation if required by its rules.

5. Appeals about access arrangements or special consideration

A student or parent/carer may ask the school to review a centre decision about whether to support an application for an access arrangement, reasonable adjustment or special consideration. The school will explain the decision and the evidence or awarding organisation rules relied on, in an accessible way.

1. Send the review request to the Headteacher or Examinations Officer as soon as possible, preferably within 10 school days of the decision. Where an examination or awarding organisation deadline is closer, contact the school immediately; the school will not wait for the ordinary timescale before protecting a live deadline.
2. The review will be considered by a suitably informed person who was not responsible for the original decision. They will consider the student's evidence, applicable JCQ and awarding organisation requirements, relevant records and whether the decision-making process was fair and consistent.
3. The school will give the outcome and reasons in writing. Where an application is supported, the Examinations Officer will submit it to the awarding organisation within the applicable deadline. The school cannot itself grant an awarding organisation's special consideration or override an awarding organisation decision.

If the student disagrees with an awarding organisation's decision, the Head of Centre will explain the relevant awarding organisation's appeal route and assist the student to make a timely representation through the centre, where the rules allow. Awarding organisation deadlines vary by issue and qualification and must be checked at the time.

6. Post-results services and appeals to an awarding organisation

Before results are issued, the school will explain the available post-results services, the relevant deadlines, any applicable fees and how to request help. These may include access to scripts, a clerical re-check, a review of marking, a review of moderation or an appeal. The exact services depend on the qualification and awarding organisation.

1. Internal candidates must make requests through the school. The Examinations Officer will explain the options and likely consequences. Awarding organisation requests require the candidate's written consent. A review can result in a higher or lower mark or grade, or no change.
2. If the Head of Centre decides not to support a request for a post-results service or an appeal, the student may ask for that centre decision to be reviewed. The request should be made promptly and before the awarding organisation deadline. An impartial person not involved in the original decision will review the reasons, evidence and applicable rules. The student will receive a written outcome.
3. Where the Head of Centre supports a request, the school will submit it in accordance with the awarding organisation's instructions and deadlines and will tell the student the outcome as soon as possible. Provisional results will not be withheld because of a dispute.
4. Appeals to awarding organisations are limited to the permitted grounds and may require a prior review of results. Only the Head of Centre (on behalf of an internal candidate) or a private candidate may submit an appeal where the relevant rules so provide. Internal students and parents/carers should therefore raise the request with the Head of Centre, not submit directly to the awarding organisation.

After all stages of the awarding organisation's appeal process have been completed, an eligible student may ask the school to consider an application to Ofqual's Exam Procedures Review Service (EPRS). EPRS considers whether the awarding organisation followed its procedures and regulatory requirements; it does not re-mark the

work or directly change the grade. The current EPRS time limit and eligibility rules must be checked before applying.

7. Malpractice-related decisions

Concerns or appeals about suspected malpractice, sanctions or decisions made by an awarding organisation will be managed under the current OFG Malpractice Policy, the relevant awarding organisation procedure and the current JCQ guidance. The student will be told the applicable process, who may submit an appeal, the grounds and the deadline. Because deadlines vary by decision type, staff must check the current awarding organisation rules immediately and support the student to respond in time.

8. Records, access and annual review

- The Examinations Officer will maintain a secure record of each complaint or appeal, the date received, the issue, evidence considered, reviewer, decision, reasons, actions and communications. Records will be retained under the school's records retention schedule and data protection requirements.
- The procedure will be made available to students and parents/carers before relevant examinations and assessments, and on request. Staff will explain the relevant route in an accessible format, with appropriate communication support and reasonable adjustments.
- The Headteacher or delegated senior leader will review the procedure at least annually and whenever JCQ, Ofqual or awarding organisation rules change. The review will check that current qualification routes, contacts, annual deadlines and links are accurate.

10. Regulatory references

This procedure must be used with the current version of the applicable rules. At the time of drafting, the following JCQ and Ofqual guidance was checked:

- JCQ, General Regulations for Approved Centres, effective 1 September 2026 - https://www.jcq.org.uk/knowledge-hub/general-regulations-for-approved-centres/
- JCQ, A guide to the awarding organisations' appeals processes, effective from June 2026 - https://www.jcq.org.uk/knowledge-hub/a-guide-to-the-awarding-bodies-appeals-processes-effective-from-june-2026/
- JCQ, Instructions for conducting examinations, effective for examinations from 1 September 2026 - https://www.jcq.org.uk/knowledge-hub/intructions-for-conducting-examinations-ice/
- JCQ, Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (GCE and GCSE), effective from 1 September 2026 - https://www.jcq.org.uk/knowledge-hub/instructions-for-conducting-non-examination-assessments-gce-gcse-specifications/
- JCQ, Notice to Centres - Informing candidates of their centre-assessed marks - https://www.jcq.org.uk/knowledge-hub/notice-to-centres-informing-candidates-of-their-centre-assessed-marks/
- Ofqual, Exam Procedures Review Service - https://www.gov.uk/guidance/exam-procedures-review-service