



August 2020

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for taking the time to contact me about A level and GCSE exam results this year.

While everyone would have preferred exams and assessments to have gone ahead this summer, I believe that cancelling them was the right decision to help tackle the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. As you will have noted, the Government has changed its policy on exam results this year since the 13th August. Therefore, I wanted to outline in my response to your email; the actions I took on this matter, why the algorithm was used and the new centre assessment grades system now adopted by Ofqual.

Since Thursday 13th August, I have been in dialogue with the Department for Education to make sure that students across the UK and in our constituency, receive the results they deserve. It became clear on Thursday that the system by Ofqual resulted in too many inconsistent and unfair outcomes for A and AS level students to be resolved through appeals. Ultimately, when making decisions of such importance to young people, we must recognise that a system that does not work for all is not good enough.

Students who previously missed a university place offer but will now meet it based on their centre assessment grade should get in contact with the university. Those who have accepted an offer will be able to release themselves if they have another offer reinstated.

After seeing centre assessed grades being used for A level results, I also wanted GCSE students to receive the same grades awarded by their teachers. I can confirm that this will be the case tomorrow and therefore GCSE students will receive their centre assessment grades on Thursday, or their calculated grade if it was higher. I am pleased that this change has occurred as I wanted to make sure we do not have a system which only works for some.

It is worth noting that the algorithm did produce roughly 60% of A level grades which were the same as those submitted by their schools or colleges. Grades produced by the algorithm had remained broadly stable with a 2.5 percentage point rise in As and A*s at A level and a record number of 18-year olds had been accepted into university. It also meant a record number from the most disadvantaged backgrounds in England were accepted into university – up 7.3% from last year. Nevertheless, it was clear that there were too many individual cases where students through no fault of their own have had their grades altered and that is why I was pleased to see the Department for Education change their stance after seeing the results published on Thursday and through lobbying by myself and fellow MPs across the house.

As an MP who has worked closely with organisations across Bracknell throughout the Pandemic, I recognise that this group of students have lost out on so much already and we must ensure that they can progress on their next step. Delaying a year should not be an option and therefore, this decision allows many to progress into further education or the workplace.

It is also worth noting that moving to centre assessment grades has had significant implications for universities and students, so the Government are lifting student number caps to help ensure there is no barrier to students being able to progress. The Department

for Education is working closely with the sector to create additional capacity and ensure they are as flexible as possible and are setting a clear expectation that they honour all offers made and met. The Universities Minister is also leading a new taskforce to coordinate this work.

I hope this can provide some reassurance regarding A level results in 2020, with the prospect of students going into further education and the workplace from this September.

Thank you once again for taking the time and effort to contact me. I wish you and your family all stay safe and well throughout the summer months.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Sunderland', is centered on a light yellow rectangular background.

James Sunderland MP
Member of Parliament for the Bracknell Constituency
Bracknell, Crowthorne, Finchampstead, Sandhurst and Wokingham Without