

Statistical Release

Appeals for GCSE and A level: Summer 2013 Exam Series

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Published:
19th March 2014

Nick Catlow
Policy Lead

Alison Fisher
Head of Statistics
024 7671 6809
statistics@ofqual.gov.uk

Key points

This release provides information on the number of appeals made for GCSE and A level in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, during the summer 2013 exam series. An appeal is made at unit/component level and can be in relation to one or more candidates.

The key findings for this release are as follows.

- The number of appeals fell by 17 per cent in 2013, compared to 2012 (407 compared to 493). However, this is more in line with 2011 when there were 401 appeals.
- Ninety-two per cent of appeals were resolved at stage 1, with only 32 progressing to stage 2 in 2013. The proportion progressing to stage 2 is similar to previous years.
- In 2013, 3 per cent of the 5,140 qualification grades involved in appeals resulted in a grade change (142).

Introduction

This statistical release, published on behalf of the qualifications regulators for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, presents data on appeals made to exam boards for the summer 2013 GCSE and A level exam series.

If a school or college is concerned about the accuracy of a candidate's result, it can ask the exam board to investigate the marking. This is known as an enquiry about result. If a school or college has gone through the enquiries about results process and is dissatisfied with the outcome, it can make an appeal to the exam board.

Six exam boards offer GCSE and A level qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- AQA
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
- International Curriculum & Assessment Agency (Examinations) (ICAA(E))
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- Pearson
- WJEC

This release:

- gives data for the six exam boards in terms of the two stages for appeals, stage 1 and stage 2;
- gives data on the number of appeals received, the number resulting in qualification grade changes, and the performance of the exam boards in meeting agreed timelines.

Your feedback is valued and further information on how to provide this is given in the 'Your feedback' section.

Tables are in the appendix at the back of this release.

Stage 1 and stage 2 appeals

(See tables 2, 3, 4 and 5, and figures 1 and 2.)

A school or college must make an appeal within 14 days of receiving the outcome of the enquiry about results. An appeal is made at unit/component level and can be in relation to one or more candidates.

There are two stages in the appeals process:

- Stage 1 is a review of the case by a senior member of the exam board who has not been involved previously with the particular case.
- Stage 2 is a presentation of the case to an appeals panel.

The majority of appeals occur when a candidate completes a qualification, though there may be some appeals involving candidates who are not certificating.

There were 407 stage 1 appeals made against GCSE and A level results; a decrease of 17 per cent from 2012, when there were 493. However, it is similar to 2011 when there were 401.

Thirty-seven of the summer 2013 appeals resulted in changes to candidates' grades, compared with 62 in 2012.

This is in the context of over 8 million GCSE and A level certifications and just under 20 million unit/component entries for the summer 2013 exam series. The number of certifications has remained stable when compared with 2012; with a 1 per cent increase, whereas the number of unit/component entries has fallen by 7 per cent.

The recent return to linear assessments for GCSEs in England means candidates certificating in summer 2014 are not able to take units early, which will have contributed to the decrease in unit/component entries for summer 2013.

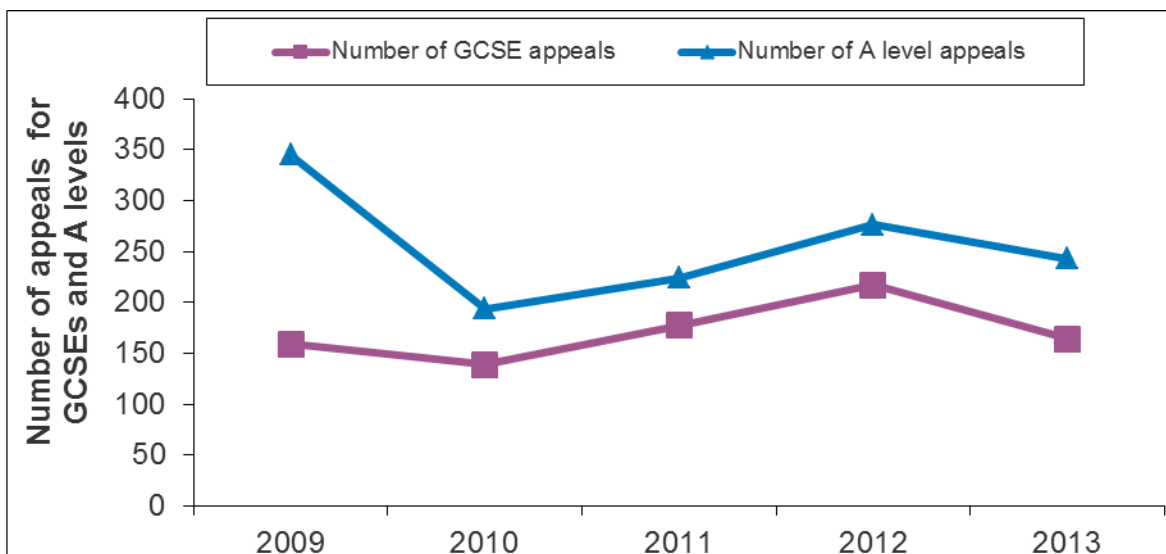
The number of appeals for GCSEs and A levels in 2013 is shown below:

	GCSE appeals	A level appeals	Appeals resulting in changes to candidates' grades'	
			<i>GCSE</i>	<i>A level</i>
Stage 1 (review)	164	243	19	18
Stage 2 (appeals panel)	14	18	0	0

Note: The number of appeals resulting in changes to candidates' grades is not the same as the total number of qualification grade changes, because an appeal may involve more than one candidate.

Both GCSE and A level have seen a reduction in the number of appeals compared with 2012. GCSE appeals went from 217 in 2012, to 164 this year. A level appeals went from 276 in 2012, to 243 this year (see figure 1 and table 3). This has reversed the recent trend of increases, seen over the previous three years.

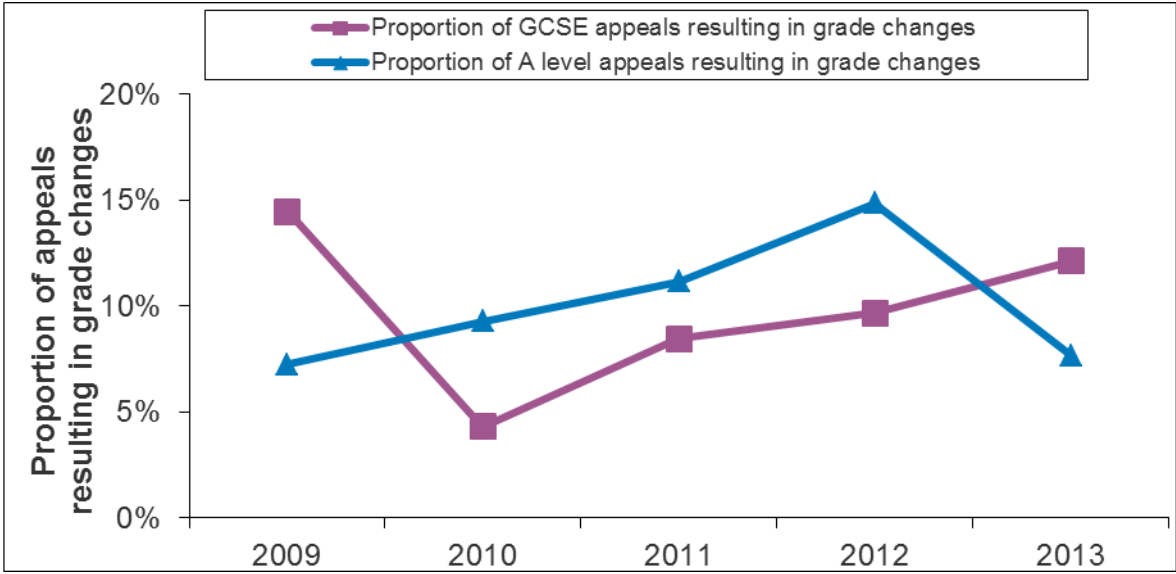
Figure 1: Number of appeals for GCSE and A level, summer exam series, 2009-2013



There has also been a reduction in the proportion of A level appeals that resulted in changes to qualification grades, down from 15 per cent to 7 per cent, when compared with last year. In 2012, one of the exam boards discovered an issue with an A level subject, which led to a high number of appeals resulting in grade changes. This will have contributed to the spike seen in 2012, with figures for 2013 falling more into line with previous years (see figure 2).

The proportion of GCSE appeals that resulted in changes to qualification grades, has risen for the fourth consecutive year, from 10 per cent in 2012 to 12 per cent in 2013 (see figure 2 and table 2).

Figure 2: Proportion of appeals resulting in grade changes, summer exam series, 2009-13



GCSEs and A levels are made up of multiple units/components which can be subject to an appeal. The 407 GCSE and A level stage 1 appeal cases, from the summer 2013 exam series, involved 5,142 units/components. These units related to 5,140 candidates' qualification grades. Three per cent of the candidates' qualification grades involved in appeals resulted in changes (142). This is down six per cent on last year, when there were 151 qualification grade changes.

Data on the number of qualification grades involved in appeals were collected for the first time in summer 2013. To aid comparisons over time, the table below also shows the number of units involved in appeals.

The number of units has declined by 16 per cent since 2012 (5,142 compared to 6,158). This is in relation to a 7 per cent decline in the total number of unit entries for GCSE and A level (see table 1 and below).

The number of unit and qualification grades involved in appeals is shown below:

Year	Number of appeals for GCSE and A level	Appeals resulting in changes to candidate grades	Number of unit grades being challenged	Number of qualification grades challenged	Total number of qualification grade changes	% of qualification grades challenged resulting in a change
2013	407	37	5,142	5,140	142	3%
2012	493	62	6,158	-	151	-
2011	401	40	6,680	-	135	-

Of the stage 1 appeals, 32 progressed to stage 2, 9 fewer than in 2012. The majority of appeals were dealt with at stage 1, with just 8 per cent progressing to stage 2, maintaining the trend of the previous five years.

Four of the stage 2 appeals were upheld in 2013, but there were no resulting qualification grade changes. This compares with seven stage 2 appeals upheld in 2012, with one qualification grade change.

All but one of the 407 stage 1 appeals have been completed at the time of writing. There were three stage 2 appeals that were not completed within the target timeline of 50 days from the initial receipt of the appeal. One of the appeals was delayed due to limited availability of parties required to be at the hearings; whilst the remaining two were due to the exam board conducting an investigation. At the time of writing, four stage 2 appeals are still in progress.

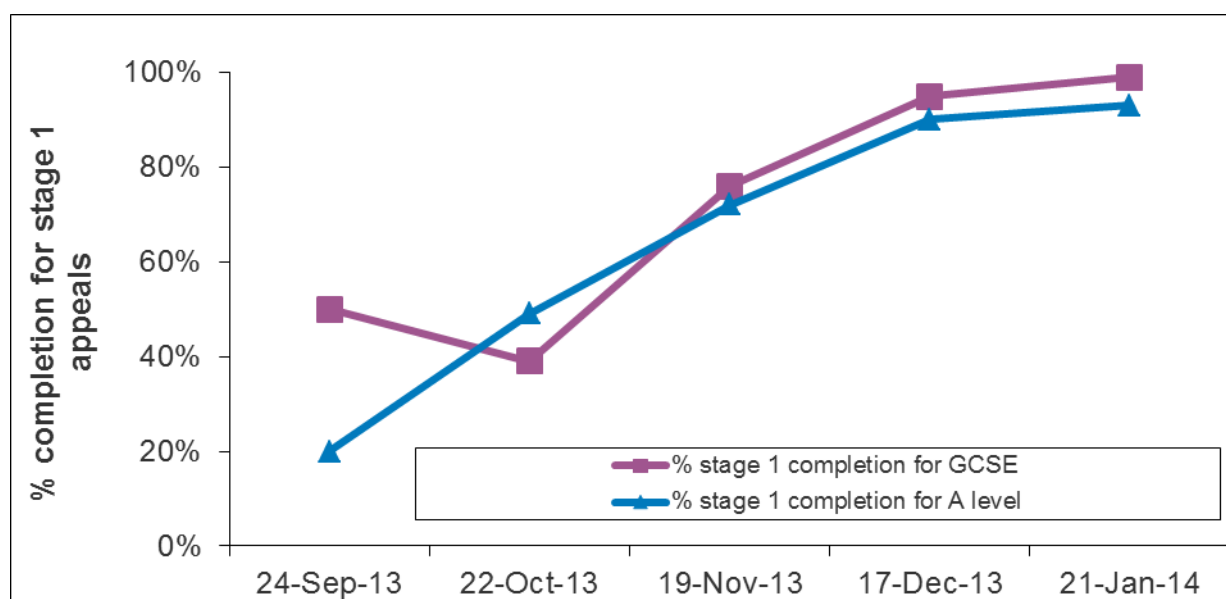
Time taken to complete appeals

The *GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice*¹ states exam boards should complete appeals within 50 working days of the original request for an appeal. Stage 2 appeals will usually take longer to complete than stage 1 appeals; as a formal hearing has to be scheduled. Of the 32 stage 2 appeals, 78 per cent (25) were completed within 50 days of receipt, with four still in progress.

Ninety-two per cent of appeals were dealt with at stage 1. Following the summer 2013 exam series, 45 per cent of stage 1 appeals were completed by mid-October. By mid-November this had risen to 74 per cent, with 92 per cent completed by mid-December (see table 6).

For GCSE, 95 per cent of appeals received were completed by mid-December. For A level, 90 per cent were completed (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Percentage completion of stage 1 appeals, for GCSE and A level, summer 2013 exam series



¹ *GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice* (Ofqual, the Welsh Government and CCEA, 2011). www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/93-codes-of-practice?download=680%3Agcse-gce-principal-learning-and-project-code-of-practice-2011

Background notes

In this release we present data on the number of appeals made for GCSEs and A levels, the number of certificates issued for these qualifications and the number of entries. The data covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the figures represent the summer 2013 exam series.

The post-results process

Enquiries about results

Every year, the GCSE and A level exam boards publish information and guidance for schools and colleges on the post-results services following exams and the issue of results.

Exam boards issue results for summer exams in August. If a school or college is concerned about the accuracy of a candidate's result, it can ask the exam board to investigate the marking. This is known as an enquiry about result.

A bulletin called *Enquiries about Results for GCSE and A level: Summer 2013 Exam Series* was published in December 2013 and is available at:

www.ofqual.gov.uk/documents/enquiries-about-results-for-gcse-and-a-level-summer-2013-exam-series.

Appeals

If a school or college has gone through the enquiries about results process and is dissatisfied with the outcome, it can appeal to the exam board. An appeal can be in relation to the grades of one or more candidates, if they are all thought to be impacted by the same issue.

A school or college must make an appeal within 14 days of receiving the outcome of the enquiry about results.

There are two stages in the appeals process:

- Stage 1 is a review of the case by a senior member of the exam board who has not been involved previously with the particular case.
- Stage 2 is a presentation of the case to an appeals panel. The exam board convenes the panel. It will comprise at least three members, one of whom must be independent (that means someone who is not, and has not been, a member of the board or committees, or an employee or examiner at the exam board, at any time during the previous five years). A school or college can take the appeal to stage 2 only after going through stage 1.

Both stages should usually be completed within 50 working days of the appeal being lodged with the exam board. In some cases appeals are not resolved until after 50 days from the initial receipt of the appeal, to allow a fair appeal hearing with appropriate evidence and individuals present from both the school or college and the exam board.

The Examination Procedures Review Service

If a school or college is dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage 2 appeal, it can apply to the Examination Procedures Review Service. The Examination Procedures Review Service is one of our teams and has taken over the work previously carried out by the Examinations Appeals Board.

We will review each application and arrange a review hearing if appropriate. We will look at whether the exam board has followed the right procedures and whether it has used them properly and fairly. Where we think there is a solid case and we are not confident the published results are appropriate, we will ask the exam board to reconsider the case. Otherwise, we will uphold the original decision of the exam board. We might appoint an observer to monitor the reconsideration of a case. Where appropriate, we can offer wider recommendations to exam boards or other regulatory authorities.

You can find further details of the Examination Procedures Review Service at: www.ofqual.gov.uk/complaints-and-appeals/exam-results-appeals

Data source

Each year, all six recognised exam boards submit data to us about the number of entries, certifications and appeals in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This release shows all of the statistics broken down by qualification type, exam board and appeals stage over the five-year period.

Limitations of data

Data are collected at the earliest point available. This reduces the time between the activity and reporting on the activity.

We cannot guarantee the figures sent to us are correct, although we expect exam boards to send us the correct data. The data reported in this release are reflective of the figures provided by the exam boards at the time of data collection.

We carry out quality assurance procedures to ensure the accuracy of the data, including asking exam boards to confirm the information sent to us, and we challenge/question it where necessary. We may also defer publication if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

Geographical coverage

In this release, we present data on certificates, entries and appeals for GCSEs and A levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland relating to the summer 2013 exam series.

Revisions

Once published, data on the number of entries, certificates and appeals are not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or correct an error.

In this release, figures from AQA, Pearson and CCEA have been revised since the 2012 release affecting entries and certifications for the academic years 2009-11.

Completeness of the data

Exam boards send us data each academic year. We contact any exam board that does not return a complete set of data within the collection period, to make sure the data are as complete as possible. For this academic year, we received data from all the exam boards that were in a position to award qualifications.

Confidentiality

To make sure the statistics in this release protect confidentiality, figures on entries, certifications and enquiries about results are rounded to the nearest 100. Numbers of appeals are exact.

Rounding

Figures in the tables for the number of entries, certificates and enquiries about results are rounded to the nearest 100. This reflects the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale data collection and makes reading the figures easier. As a result of rounded figures, the total shown in tables may not necessarily be a sum of the individual figures.

Glossary of terms

A level

Available as advanced level (A level) and advanced subsidiary (AS) qualifications. They are the qualifications that the majority of students use to gain entry to university. They are generally sat by 17- to 18-year-olds in schools and colleges, but are open to anyone who wishes to gain a qualification.

Certificate/certification

A formal acknowledgement of a student's achievement.

GCSE

General Certificates of Secondary Education are the main school-leaving qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They are available in a range of subjects and can be studied alongside other qualifications. They are generally sat by 15- to 18-year-olds in schools and colleges, but are open to anyone who wishes to gain a qualification.

Your feedback

If you use our statistical releases we would like to hear from you.

We are running a rolling series of online surveys to make sure that each of our statistical releases meets your requirements.

We would especially like to invite you to take part. It will take about 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain entirely confidential in any reports published about the survey.

If you would like to take part, have any questions, or would prefer a paper or large type copy, please contact us at statistics@ofqual.gov.uk.

Appendix

Table 1	Appeals that resulted in a grade change for GCSE and A level, summer exam series, 2009–13
Table 2	Appeals for GCSE and A level, by appeal type, summer exam series, 2011–13
Table 3	Total appeals by exam board for GCSE, summer exam series, 2009–13
Table 4	Total appeals by exam board for A level, summer exam series, 2009–13
Table 5	Percentage completion within deadline, for stage 1 appeals, for GCSE and A level, summer exam series, 2011-13

Table 1: Appeals that resulted in a grade change for GCSE and A level, summer exam series, 2009–13

England, Wales & Northern Ireland

	Year	Number of appeals received	Number of appeals resulting in qualification grade changes			
			Stage 1	Stage 2	Total	%
GCSE	2009	159	20	3	23	14%
	2010	139	6	0	6	4%
	2011	177	12	3	15	8%
	2012	217	21	0	21	10%
	2013	164	19	0	19	12%
A level	2009	345	24	1	25	7%
	2010	194	18	0	18	9%
	2011	224	22	3	25	11%
	2012	276	40	1	41	15%
	2013	243	18	0	18	7%
Total	2009	504	44	4	48	10%
	2010	333	24	0	24	7%
	2011	401	34	6	40	10%
	2012	493	61	1	62	13%
	2013	407	37	0	37	9%

Notes:

1. Grades may go up or down following an appeal.
2. Data are supplied by exam boards.

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Table 2: Appeals for GCSE and A level, by appeal type, summer exam series, 2009–13

England, Wales & Northern Ireland

		Number of appeals				
	Year	Stage 1 appeals received	Appeals progressing to stage 2	Stage 2 Appeals still in progress	Stage 2 appeals completed within 50 days of receipt	% of stage 2 appeals completed within 50 days of receipt
GCSE	2009	159	22	4	17	77%
	2010	139	11	0	11	100%
	2011	177	16	5	9	56%
	2012	217	19	3	13	68%
	2013	164	14	2	11	79%
A level	2009	345	19	4	14	74%
	2010	194	18	0	17	94%
	2011	224	24	3	19	79%
	2012	276	22	2	17	77%
	2013	243	18	2	14	78%
Total	2009	504	41	8	31	76%
	2010	333	29	0	28	97%
	2011	401	40	8	28	70%
	2012	493	41	5	30	73%
	2013	407	32	4	25	78%

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by exam boards.

Table 3: Total appeals by exam board for GCSE, summer exam series, 2009–13

England, Wales & Northern Ireland

		Appeals			
	Year	Total number of enquiries about results received	Stage 1 appeals received	Appeals progressing to stage 2	Appeals that resulted in changes to candidates' qualification grades
AQA	2009	45,600	47	14	2
	2010	46,200	33	4	2
	2011	58,500	51	9	1
	2012	82,400	56	14	2
	2013	82,100	41	11	5
Pearson	2009	23,400	68	3	12
	2010	25,600	62	1	3
	2011	32,000	88	4	3
	2012	46,100	105	1	14
	2013	56,100	72	2	3
OCR	2009	19,900	41	5	7
	2010	20,700	39	6	0
	2011	20,500	30	3	7
	2012	29,500	33	4	1
	2013	28,400	19	1	2
CCEA	2009	3,700	2	0	2
	2010	4,800	5	0	1
	2011	4,900	7	0	4
	2012	5,200	11	0	3
	2013	5,900	10	0	3
WJEC	2009	5,100	1	0	0
	2010	6,500	0	0	0
	2011	10,300	1	0	0
	2012	24,200	12	0	1
	2013	23,700	22	0	6
ICAA(E)	2011	200	0	0	0
	2012	-	0	0	0
	2013	0	0	0	0
Total	2009	97,600	159	22	23
	2010	103,600	139	11	6
	2011	126,300	177	16	15
	2012	187,400	217	19	21
	2013	196,200	164	14	19

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Figures for enquiries cover all services, and have been rounded to the nearest hundred.
2. Figures have been rounded independently so may not sum to the total.
3. Grades may go up or down following an appeal.
4. Data are supplied by exam boards.
5. ICAA(E) awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. It had two enquiries in 2012, but this is represented as a '-' due to rounding. It had no enquiries in 2013.

Table 4: Total appeals by exam board for A level, summer exam series, 2009–13

England, Wales & Northern Ireland

		Appeals			
	Year	Total number of enquiries about results received	Stage 1 appeals received	Appeals progressing to stage 2	Appeals that resulted in changes to candidates' qualification grades
AQA	2009	25,700	28	4	0
	2010	27,700	27	8	2
	2011	31,700	29	9	0
	2012	38,600	30	6	2
	2013	46,200	54	4	3
Pearson	2009	20,200	246	7	20
	2010	16,300	103	6	12
	2011	19,100	111	6	11
	2012	22,000	147	6	20
	2013	25,600	98	5	1
OCR	2009	18,200	65	6	5
	2010	17,500	57	4	2
	2011	20,000	73	9	9
	2012	22,000	80	10	11
	2013	26,700	71	8	11
CCEA	2009	2,500	5	1	0
	2010	2,900	7	0	2
	2011	3,300	9	0	3
	2012	4,000	16	0	8
	2013	3,800	17	1	3
WJEC	2009	3,200	1	1	0
	2010	3,700	0	0	0
	2011	4,200	2	0	2
	2012	5,100	3	0	0
	2013	5,800	3	0	0
Total	2009	69,800	345	19	25
	2010	68,100	194	18	18
	2011	78,300	224	24	25
	2012	91,700	276	22	41
	2013	108,200	243	18	18

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Figures for enquiries cover all services, and have been rounded to the nearest hundred.
2. Figures have been rounded independently so may not sum to the total.
3. Grades may go up or down following an appeal.
4. Data are supplied by exam boards.

Table 5: Percentage completion within deadline, for stage 1 appeals, for GCSE and A level, summer exam series, 2011-13

England, Wales & Northern Ireland

	Year	Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec		Jan	
		Stage 1 appeals	% completed	Stage 1 appeals	% completed	Stage 1 appeals	% completed	Stage 1 appeals	% completed	Stage 1 appeals	% completed
GCSE	2011	21	5%	97	36%	157	70%	167	95%	174	97%
	2012	18	33%	139	42%	203	80%	207	96%	218	99%
	2013	34	50%	115	39%	149	76%	160	95%	161	99%
A level	2011	72	13%	164	51%	203	78%	219	92%	221	97%
	2012	95	23%	225	52%	267	79%	273	97%	274	99%
	2013	65	20%	176	49%	230	72%	242	90%	244	93%
Total	2011	93	11%	261	45%	360	74%	386	93%	395	97%
	2012	113	25%	364	49%	470	79%	480	96%	492	99%
	2013	99	30%	291	45%	379	74%	402	92%	405	95%

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by exam boards.
2. There is a difference in the number of appeals in January and the final figures published in the report as data on final totals are submitted by exam boards in February.

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First published by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation in 2014

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation	
Spring Place	2nd Floor
Coventry Business Park	Glendinning House
Herald Avenue	6 Murray Street
Coventry CV5 6UB	Belfast BT1 6DN

Telephone 0300 303 3344
Textphone 0300 303 3345
Helpline 0300 303 3346