



**Confederation  
of School Trusts**

## **2023 GCSE and A level results: Early insights into national trends**

### **Background**

Exams were not taken during 2020 and 2021. In 2020 exam centres were asked to provide centre-assessed grades (CAGs). In 2021 teachers assigned grades to students (TAGs). Grades rose nationally in 2020, and again in 2021 as a result of these processes. The exams regulator Ofqual indicated that it would restore grades to around pre-pandemic levels in two stages, along with a number of other mitigations to support students in the exams themselves.

Grades therefore dropped in 2022 as the first step in this restoration process. This was not necessarily to levels halfway between 2019 and 2021; there was variation across different subjects. Hence in 2023 grades in some subjects have fallen more sharply nationally than in 2022.

Different approaches are being taken in Wales and Northern Ireland.

### **Considerations**

Students' performance varies from year to year in any given exam centre. This is normal, and is helpfully documented by Ofqual in charts showing centre variability.

The cohort of students taking A levels and other Level 3 qualifications this year has not taken exams before. These students received TAGs in 2021. On average, these students had higher GCSE grades than in 2020, 2019 and previous years.

This cohort is larger than previous years and has proportionately higher numbers of A level entries than in previous cohorts. This may be because students have been able to follow A level courses based on higher-than-normal GCSE grades.

### **Advice for trust leaders**

Performance at Key Stage 4 and 5 in 2023 should not be compared with 2022, 2021, or 2020 because grades were awarded using different processes. This applies to overall attainment and the performance of individual subjects.

There are no Level 3 Value-added measures in 2023 because these students have TAGs and the DfE will not use these for accountability. Using data from previous years is likely to lead to misleading conclusions.

The Progress 8 measure will be produced as normal in 2023. Attainment 8 and other attainment measures will fall nationally in line with the reductions in grades.

For both Key Stage 4 and 5, attainment measures should not be compared with 2022, 2021 or 2020.

Schools have reported an increased number of students who did not fully engage with the examinations process. In schools where this is the case there may be a significant impact on Attainment 8 and Progress 8. Trust leaders should look beyond average scores and consider how these might have been affected.