

Interview transcript

Chair of Ofqual Kathleen Tattersall speaking to BBC Radio Wales

Wednesday, October 7, 2009



The comments were below were given to BBC Radio Wales at 2pm on Wednesday, October 7, 2009. The interview was requested as a follow-up to her speech at the HMC event the previous day, during which she spoke about the possibility of changing the timing of A level results day.

Kathleen Tattersall, Chair of Ofqual:

"What we were concerned about, and this is where this particular point came up, was an incident reported by a colleague in the HMC, whose conference I was addressing, that a candidate whose appeal against her original grade had been upheld and then lost her university place. The place had actually gone because of the time involved.

"So the question for us is whether we can shave some time off the period when the results actually go out, in other words get the results out to schools a bit earlier, and that is a question that we want to discuss with the awarding bodies because what we don't want to happen is that all their quality assurance procedures are compromised by bringing the date for the return of results earlier.

"And then there is another question and that is to whether some time can be shaved off the other end. In other words, get the examinations arranged slightly earlier and that's really a question for schools themselves, because again what we wouldn't want to see is that the quality of teaching was compromised by having a slightly shorter period of teaching up to the examination time.

"So we are just raising the question and what we want to do is discuss particularly the earlier return of results with the awarding bodies to see how technology itself might enable the period of the return of the results to be brought forward, and to leave with schools the question as to whether it is possible to move the examinations just slightly earlier. But it is not for us to decide that, it is a matter for schools.

"There is an accelerated appeals system in order to get results very quickly back to schools and it's a matter of two or three weeks. I'm not exactly sure of the time but it's a very short period*. Nevertheless it's a very crucial period and it's a question of whether the universities themselves will hold open a place for someone who has appealed against a grade.

There is then a question for the universities themselves as to how they handle the situation that we are talking about. That is a matter for universities, we have no authority at all over the universities and it is a matter for universities to consider. Of course, they are also considering the whole range of how they go about offering places and the wider access agenda is one area where they are working with schools to ensure that students whose families have no previous history of going on to university are able to access university. At the other end, they are dealing with situations as I've outlined, where there is an appeal and where it's necessary to ensure that candidates have the best deal and they are not disadvantaged by the time of the appeal.

Interview ends

* The deadline for a priority post-results review of marking is 18 calendar days of receipt.