



# NSEAD Raw Marks Survey Report 2

## Introduction

This survey report builds on the findings of [NSEAD's Raw Marks Survey 1](#) (Oct 2024). Following the publication of our first report, we [held meetings with both with Ofqual and the Joint Council for Quaifications \(JCQ\)](#). This second Raw Marks survey aims to better identify where, when and how the issuing of Raw Marks mostly impacts art and design teachers and learners. Based on these findings, we have proposed a series of recommendations, improvements, and changes to the process for policy makers.

## Need to Know

### What are Raw Marks?

Raw Marks for GCSE and A level Art and Design are the actual number of marks, or the score a candidate achieves in an exam or coursework before any adjustments are made. They are not the final grades awarded. Raw Marks are used in both GCSE and A level Art and Design, but they do not automatically translate into grades awarded. Grade boundaries fluctuate each year, as they are set after moderation and based on national performance each year. This means that a score of 60/80 in one year is not equal ( $\neq$ ) to 60/80 in another year, which can sometimes lead to misinterpretation of Raw Marks by parents, carers and candidates.

JCQ requires that candidates receive 100 per cent of their teacher-assessed Raw Marks (i.e. component 1 and 2. Our subject is unique and distinct and is the only subject required to give all marks. JCQ supplies some guidance for centres: [Informing candidates of their centre-assessed marks](#). Raw marks are given at the end of component 2, after assessment and standardisation, before submitting marks to examination boards. Raw marks are often given just before or during public examinations.

**When did Raw Marks Survey #2 took place:** Raw Marks Survey #2 was carried out between 4 September 2025 to 10 Oct 2025.

**Who participated:** A total of 338 art and design teacher respondents participated in the survey. This compared well to [Raw Marks survey 1](#) where 310 took part.

**Where and how:** The majority of art and design teachers and heads of department who responded, work in academies (189), followed by independent schools (50), local authority-maintained schools (45), and grammar (22). Smaller numbers working in other centre types account for the remaining 32 respondents. The survey took place online using Microsoft Forms. There were nine questions in total. Two questions required qualitative open responses – 444 comments were given in total.

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## Foreword:

Nine years have passed since schools were formally required to give all art and design candidates their Raw Marks (2017-18). In that time, only NSEAD has undertaken systematic data collection for this process – to include the number of reviews requested, the extent of mark changes, and who is most affected.

Art and design is the only GCSE and A level subject in which all Raw Marks must be provided to candidates. While this process has been implemented in most centres, it has not been adopted universally. Responses to this survey indicate that many art and design teachers complete reviews in their own time, adding to an already significant workload.

This is an indicative survey, and we urge the organisations responsible for managing this process to undertake a full and comprehensive review. The findings highlight notable differences across the sector: certain types of schools are more likely to be asked to carry out reviews, and some more likely to experience changes to candidates' marks.

Across all school types, survey respondents showed there is widespread dissatisfaction with the Raw Marks process. The voices of our subject community – its committed and highly skilled workforce – are clearly represented here. Teachers have offered thoughtful, balanced feedback, alongside practical recommendations for improvement. These insights reflect nine years of navigating guidance and timelines that are often inconsistent, and a process that has, in many cases, diverted time away from teaching and learning.

Now is the moment to reflect, review, and revise. We commend to policy makers our Raw Marks Survey Report 2, its recommendations to remove or improve the process.

**Michele Gregson, NSEAD General Secretary and CEO**



## Section 1 – Raw Marks a Summary of Findings

Grammar schools are the most likely type of school to be asked by parents or pupils to carry out Raw Marks reviews of their assessments. 95.5% of grammar school respondents reported that they conduct reviews. Following a review, respondents in grammar schools also reported the highest percentage of mark changes (24%). Respondents teaching in Local authority schools also reported relatively high levels of activity, with 53% indicating that they had undertaken Raw Mark reviews – 17% of these resulted in mark changes.

Ninety-three percent of respondents found the timing of giving Raw Marks was 'not at all helpful' or 'quite unhelpful', while only 5.6% reported that it was 'quite' or 'very helpful'. The process adds pressure to tight marking schedules, and many respondents described that the process has shortened time for course work and teaching. Mostly, it is the responsibility of teachers to carry out reviews. Respondents highlighted that Raw Marks are given to students just before or during their other public examinations.

The need for clear, subject-specific, and more consistent guidance was often suggested. Standardised guidance and communication materials would reduce confusion and

ensure greater consistency across centres. The JCQ guidance was described as 'Not at all or quite unhelpful' by two-thirds of respondents (66.8%); 27.8% found it quite helpful of very helpful. This guidance had not been seen by 5.3% of survey respondents.

**The requirement to remove the process of giving Raw Marks for certain components, particularly the Externally Set Assignment (ESA), would be welcomed.**

Art and design teachers are uniquely required to give all Raw Marks to each candidate. This leads to both pupils and/or parents trying to figure out what grade they or their children have achieved. AI tools and previous years' grade boundaries are being used to wrongly convert marks to grades, and Raw Marks reviews are being used to 'play the system' and gain additional marks.

Overall, the process of managing Raw Marks impacts on workload and wellbeing. Raw marks are given to candidates at the end of the course, after standardisation but prior to moderation. For candidates this is just before or during pupils' other public examinations. This bottleneck places additional pressure on both teachers and students.

The majority of comments express a desire for the process to be simplified, better supported – removed in part, or entirely removed.

## Recommendations for Raw Marks

- Continue to give Raw Marks Component 1 for the portfolio of work. Remove the requirement to share Raw Marks for Component 2, the externally set task.
- Ensure that Raw Marks guidance is up to date, clear and speaks to art and design subject specialists and examination officers. Consult with art and design teachers to ensure the guidance is practical and manageable.
- Propose recommended timelines that optimise the process and management of Raw Marks and Raw Marks reviews.
- Provide online training for anyone sharing Raw Marks or completing Raw Marks reviews.
- Give Raw Marks to students only after moderation has been completed.
- Create 'student speak' official guidance that outlines why Raw Marks are required and must be issued.
- Make clear that examination officers should carry out the process of giving Raw Marks to students and make arrangements for Raw Mark reviews.
- Awarding organisations should annually collect, track and report on Raw Marks reviews.
- Policy makers should carry out a full subject-specific Raw Marks consultation to review the process, improve it or remove it.

## Section 2 – Survey Findings

### Who is undertaking most and least reviews of Raw Mark?

**Grammar schools are the most likely type of school to be asked by parents or pupils to carry out Raw Marks reviews of their assessments. 95.5% of grammar school respondents reported that they conduct reviews. Following a review, respondents in grammar schools also reported the highest percentage of mark changes (24%). Respondents teaching in Local authority schools also reported relatively high levels of activity, with 53% indicating that they had undertaken Raw Mark reviews – 17% of these resulted in mark changes.**

Academies and independent schools report moderate levels of engagement with the process, with 34.5% and 32% respectively indicating that they had carried out reviews.

**Who has the most and least changes to marks following Raw Mark reviews?** In terms of outcomes, grammar school respondents report the highest proportion of reviews to result in mark changes, with around a quarter of their reviews (24%) leading to a revised mark. Academies report a similar proportion, with 22% of respondents reporting that their reviews resulted in mark changes. The proportion is lower among Local Authority schools, where 17% of reviews lead to changes. In independent schools, 6% of reviews resulted in mark adjustments. This indicates that there are discrepancies across the sector, with grammar schools having the most reviews and the most likelihood of a review leading to changes in marks.

A higher proportion of mark changes could be an indication of parental pressure in grammar schools.

**Who is managing the Raw Mark's process:** The responsibility for arranging and managing raw marks reviews is overwhelmingly undertaken by art and design teachers or heads of department, accounting for 79% of responses. A small proportion of centres rely on examination officers (19.4%) or senior leadership teams (9.4%) to manage the process. Some respondents suggested removing the art teacher out of the administration of the appeals process.

Several respondents shared that their centres do not give raw marks to candidates.

**Time undertaking reviews:** Respondents reported that the process can be time-consuming: Over half (55%) indicated that completing a review typically takes between two and seven hours; while just over a third (34%) of respondents, indicated reviews can take one or more working days. One respondent said: 'in my four years as HOD, I have completed dozens of reviews. The process is time consuming and ultimately, in my case, has not revealed any errors.'

**School type and time disadvantages:** Several large centres noted that it disproportionately disadvantages larger schools that have more candidates. They noted that a larger cohort requires more time for the Raw Marks process and less time and opportunity for teaching and learning. This was described as a state-school stakeholder disadvantage.

## When do Raw Marks reviews take place?

**Ninety-three percent of respondents found the timing of giving Raw Marks was ‘not at all helpful’ or ‘quite unhelpful’, while only 5.6% reported that it was ‘quite’ or ‘very helpful’. The process adds pressure to tight marking schedules, and many respondents described that the process has shortened time for course work and teaching. Mostly, it is the responsibility of teachers to carry out reviews. Respondents highlighted that Raw Marks are given to students just before or during their other public examinations.**

**The trouble with Raw Marks timing:** Many respondents raised concerns about the timing of the process, noting that Raw Marks need to be given to students during a pressure point in the academic year – when the majority of candidates are about to start or have started their other public examinations. Many shared their students can feel disappointment and stress at the worst time of year: ‘when we should be celebrating completing the work and the pupils should be focusing on revision of their other subjects.’

There were suggestions that the appeal window should be reduced and that the overall timeline should be more clearly defined. Respondents noted that teachers are required to complete marking without additional timetabled time, and that the current arrangements can create significant time pressures. Clarity on who is responsible and ensuring examination officers are fully informed would assist the workload of teachers.

Respondents described the timeframe between sharing marks and submitting them to an awarding body as ‘unrealistic’

and ‘unmanageable’. Some reported that this requires courses to be completed earlier than planned and adds pressure to already tight marking schedules.

The absence of clear guidance and exact timelines was seen to contribute to inconsistency between centres. More broadly, respondents expressed concern that the current process is anxiety inducing, placing considerable pressure on teachers, and may contribute to increased stress for students.

Respondents described how the Raw Marks process has shortened courses by 1-2 weeks – impacting on teaching and moderation. Many noted that the deadline for completion of the course now needs to be even earlier to ensure there is enough time to provide Raw Marks, and to potentially manage a review. However, this would remove time for teaching and learning.

Respondents noted the Raw Marks schedule varies according to exam boards. Some respondents noted that marks can be changed after moderation, and that it would be better to give Raw Marks only after the moderator’s visit.

There were calls to remove the process as it adds to and hinders marking timelines; or for the appeals to take place in August in line with the majority of subjects.

## Communication and consistency in the Raw Marks guidance:

**The need for clear, subject-specific and more consistent guidance was often suggested. Standardised guidance and**

**communication materials would reduce confusion and ensure greater consistency across centres. The JCQ guidance was described as 'Not at all or quite unhelpful' by 66.8% of respondents; 27.8% found it quite helpful or very helpful. This guidance had not been seen by 5.3% of survey respondents.**

**Remove outdated guidance and improve existing**

**information:** There were many calls to remove all outdated Raw Marks information and to introduce standardised Raw Marks communication templates – this would support schools in providing clear and consistent information to parents and students. Others felt that stricter criteria for appeals may be needed. These communications should clearly explain what Raw Marks are, why they may change after moderation, and how they differ from final grades. Respondents suggested that appeals process proformers or templates would be helpful, so that heads of art and design do not have to.

**Clarifying the Raw Marks review process:** There were repeated calls for greater clarity about the purpose of the review process. Respondents noted that students and parents often misunderstand reviews as an opportunity to challenge marks, rather than a review of the marking process itself. Several respondents suggested that guidance should explicitly state that wanting a higher grade is not a valid reason for requesting a review, and that appeals relate to the process of marking or moderation rather than the marks awarded. Clarification of the Raw Marks timeline would be helpful. It is also the candidates' only opportunity to appeal, but the current guidance does not explicitly state this.

**Inconsistency between exam boards on submission and Raw Marks deadlines:** There are inconsistencies for the submission of marks to exam boards. This causes confusion, and respondents noted this may benefit some boards over others. Inconsistencies can be exacerbated when half-term falls on certain dates.

**Inconsistencies in managing the process across centres:**

Many respondents noted the wide-ranging inconsistencies in the way Raw Marks are managed by schools. Some respondents said their schools charge; others noted that they know of schools that do not share their raw marks with students. This is, 'Either to avoid the administrative burden or because staff are unaware of the requirement.' One respondent said: 'My previous school made the process very scary. We felt like we were going to get in trouble if we got it wrong and could be sanctioned and formally disciplined if we hadn't followed it all correctly. In my new school they don't give out the marks.'

**Raw Marks training:** Training provided either by examination boards or JCQ was suggested to help address Raw Marks inconsistencies. One respondent said: 'As I understand it, it is an appeal for the process of marking. Not their mark that they [students] appeal. Many teachers seem to not understand this.' Guidance is needed to emphasise that it is the process and not the marks that can be appealed. Another respondent said: 'There's no actual training or CPD for art teachers (or for those teachers who complete reviews and sign off reviews). Doing this online, along with SLT & exam officers might be helpful.'

## What is reviewed by Art and Design GCSE and A level?

**The requirement to remove the process of giving Raw Marks for certain components, particularly the Externally Set Assignment (ESA), would be welcomed.**

Many teachers respected the positive impact of giving component marks for Component 1, indeed it was suggested this could be useful to pupils and to staff for review purposes. But, additionally giving Component 2 marks, 'just creates conflict and upset in what is one of your final lessons with the pupils.'

Respondents suggested removing Raw Marks for the ESA, noting that art and design teachers shouldn't be required to give Raw Marks for work that takes place in exam conditions. Respondents indicated that giving only the Component 1 Raw Marks, could help with timings and motivation in Component 2.

## Raw Marks and subject-specific concerns:

**Art and design teachers are uniquely required to give the full Raw Mark to each student. This leads to both pupils and/or parents trying to figure out what grade they or their children have achieved. AI tools and previous years' grade boundaries are being used to wrongly convert marks to grades, and Raw Marks reviews are being used to 'play the system' and gain additional marks.**

Respondents reported that both students and parents miscalculate their grades, and this alone results in many of the reviews. One centre noted 'A level numbers have reduced since

the Raw Marks situation.' Discussion in online parent and student forums include ways to use Raw Marks appeals to, 'Squeeze a few more marks.'

The subject-specific requirement to give all Marks means that larger centres are disadvantaged over smaller schools. The time taken for those qualified to undertake many reviews means that more time needs to be taken from study.

## The impact on wellbeing of giving raw marks on students and teachers

**Overall the process of managing Raw Marks impacts on workload and wellbeing. Raw marks are given at the end of the course, after standardisation but prior to moderation. For candidates this is just before or during pupils' other public examinations. This bottleneck places additional pressure on both teachers and students.**

In the 'Additional Comments' section of the survey, there were 245 comments. The word 'stress' was used on 72 separate occasions; 'stressful' was used 46 times; 'pressure' was used 41 times. Comments included: 'Giving raw marks to students around the time of taking their other subject exams is stressful for them'; 'It causes disappointment and stress at the worst time of year'; 'Massively impacts students mental health just before sitting all other exams'; 'Giving raw marks to children who are embarking on their exam season creates stress and overwhelm for them.'

The process impacts on teachers' wellbeing. Comments included: 'It adds a great deal of extra pressure at a time where the workload to complete marking has been immense'; 'This adds stress during an already high-pressure period'; 'Can result in strained relationships with teachers, students and families.

Giving Raw Marks to students was described as demoralising as teachers' professional integrity is undermined by process 'it's questioning the professionalism of the art teachers. I have experienced very aggressive parents blaming staff for students not achieving high grades.'; 'Our professional experience and judgment is undermined.' There were calls for a comprehensive review specifically for the art and design Raw Marks processes. This would help mitigate address the unintended consequences of the current Raw Marks system on teachers and learners.

## Acknowledgements

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