

Disadvantaged pupils could be unfairly penalised by using predicted grades during pandemic, expert warns

June 11 2020



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This year's system of using predicted grades to award A-level and GCSE

results should be closely monitored to ensure it doesn't unfairly penalize disadvantaged pupils, a social mobility expert has warned.

Using teacher judgment to award marks may lead to some pupils missing out on the [grades](#) they deserve, according to Lee Elliot Major, Professor of Social Mobility at the University of Exeter.

Professor Elliot Major told MPs the Government should undertake work to look at the impact of the system of predicted grades being used in 2020 on poorer pupils.

Giving evidence to members of the Education Select Committee, Professor Elliot Major said grade appeals should be monitored to ensure they are coming from different schools not just those that mostly serve middle class pupils.

Professor Elliot Major said teachers urgently need clarity on how assessment will be delivered in 2021 before the end of this academic year. A fair way to determine next year's grades for GCSEs and A-levels would be through a combination of teacher assessments and a small number of core exams.

Commenting before giving evidence Professor Elliot Major said: "I have no doubt teachers will do their best to ensure their assessments are fair and comprehensive, but using work completed in [school](#) and previous results will not cater for late surges in the exam hall. We know that group is often made up of boys and those who come from disadvantaged families. Assessment is an inexact science. We need to ensure that unconscious bias does not penalize children from poorer and BAME backgrounds."

He added, "Universities may also need to consider if they should lower offer grades for disadvantaged applicants who have faced particularly

difficult circumstances during the crisis."

Professor Elliot Major is working with organizations and MPs to convince the Government to back a new national tutoring service, with university students and graduates helping children to catch up during the next school year. He believes such an initiative would tap into the younger generation's commitment to social justice.

He has recommended there should be a new "credible" vocational stream alongside current academic routes in the upper years of secondary schools with all pupils expected to pass a school certificate in basic skills. The apprenticeship levy should be recast as a lifelong learning levy to train and retrain people at all ages and stages of their career, and jobs should be guaranteed for people who are facing long term unemployment.

"We face profound economic and educational inequalities, but this will particularly hit the under-25s," he said. "We must now develop policies to address the potential longer-term scarring effects on the COVID generation. We have an opportunity to create a fairer society for all."

Provided by University of Exeter

Citation: Disadvantaged pupils could be unfairly penalised by using predicted grades during pandemic, expert warns (2020, June 11) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-06-disadvantaged-pupils-unfairly-penalised-grades.html>

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