

Parent Action Guide

GCSE & A-Level Results Day: What to Do If Your Child Doesn't Get the Grades They Were Hoping For

Take a deep breath. Every year, thousands of students don't get the grades they expected, yet most still go on to college, university or rewarding careers.

The key is to act calmly, know who to contact and understand the options available.

This guide will help you navigate Results Day with confidence.

Before Results Day

Being prepared can save valuable time.

Have the following ready:

- Your child's GCSE or A-Level results.
- Their UCAS ID (A-Level students).
- Student ID number.
- Email login details.
- Mobile phone fully charged.
- Pen and paper for taking notes.
- A list of college or university contact numbers.
- Copies of any offer letters or emails.

Step 1 – Read the Results Carefully

Before making any calls:

- ✓ Check every grade.
- ✓ Make sure there are no missing subjects.
- ✓ Compare the grades with the entry requirements for your child's chosen course.

Sometimes students still meet the requirements even if one grade is lower than expected.

Step 2 – Contact the School First

Your child's school or sixth form should always be your first point of contact.

Speak to:

- Head of Sixth Form
- Careers Adviser
- Exams Officer
- Form Tutor (if available)

Ask:

- Were these grades expected?
- Are they suitable for a Review of Marking?
- Can my child resit any subjects?
- What alternative pathways would you recommend?
- Can you support us with UCAS Clearing if needed?

Schools deal with Results Day every year and can often offer immediate guidance.

If Your Child Hasn't Achieved the GCSE Grades Needed

Contact the Sixth Form or College Admissions Team

Don't assume the answer is "No."

Many schools and colleges:

- Accept students with slightly lower grades.
- Offer a different course.
- Recommend an alternative qualification.
- Suggest starting on a Level 2 course before progressing.

Ask:

- Can my child still enrol?
- Is there flexibility on the entry requirements?
- Are there similar courses available?
- What is the deadline for accepting a place?

Other GCSE Options

If the original plan isn't possible, consider:

Further Education (FE) Colleges

Many FE colleges offer:

- GCSE resits
- BTEC qualifications
- T Levels
- Vocational courses
- Construction
- Engineering
- Hair & Beauty
- Health & Social Care

- Business
- IT
- Animal Care
- Public Services

Many students thrive in a more practical learning environment.

Apprenticeships

If your child prefers learning through work, apprenticeships allow them to:

- Earn a wage.
- Gain recognised qualifications.
- Build real work experience.
- Avoid student debt.

They are available in hundreds of industries—not just trades.

If Your Child Hasn't Achieved Their A-Level Offer

Don't panic.

Many universities still accept students who narrowly miss their offer.

Contact the University Admissions Team

Do this before assuming the place has been lost.

Ask:

- Has my child still been accepted?
- Is there any flexibility?
- Is there another course with available places?
- Could they start with a Foundation Year?
- Is deferred entry an option?

Admissions tutors consider more than just grades.

If the University Cannot Offer a Place

Use UCAS Clearing

Clearing helps students find courses with vacancies.

Before calling universities:

Have ready:

- UCAS ID.

- Results.
- Personal statement summary.
- A list of courses you're interested in.

When speaking to admissions staff:

Be polite.

Be positive.

Be honest.

Let your child do as much of the talking as possible. Universities want to speak directly to the applicant whenever possible.

Foundation Years

Many universities offer Foundation Years.

These provide an extra year of study before beginning a degree.

They are ideal if a student narrowly misses the required grades but still has the ability and motivation to succeed.

Degree Apprenticeships

An increasingly popular option.

Students:

- Work for an employer.
- Earn a salary.
- Study towards a degree.
- Graduate with little or no tuition fee debt.

Many employers actively recruit through this route.

Should You Appeal the Grades?

If teachers believe something doesn't look right, ask about:

- Review of Marking.
- Clerical checks.
- Appeals (where appropriate).

Remember:

Appeals should be based on evidence, not simply disappointment.

Your school will advise whether an appeal has a realistic chance of success.

Resits

If your child needs to improve a grade:

Ask:

- Can they resit at their current school?
- Would a local FE college offer resits?
- When are the next examination dates?

Many students improve their grades significantly second time around.

Questions Every Parent Should Ask

- ✓ What are all our options?
- ✓ What are today's deadlines?
- ✓ Who do we contact next?
- ✓ Can we keep our current offer?
- ✓ Are there alternative courses?
- ✓ Is a Foundation Year available?
- ✓ Should we apply through Clearing?
- ✓ Is an apprenticeship a better route?

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- ✗ Assuming every opportunity has gone.
- ✗ Turning down one offer before exploring alternatives.
- ✗ Rushing into the first available course.
- ✗ Comparing your child with others.
- ✗ Making emotional decisions before gathering all the facts.

Useful Websites

- UCAS – Clearing, university offers and course vacancies.
- National Careers Service – Careers advice and training options.
- GOV.UK – Find an Apprenticeship.
- Local Further Education colleges – Course vacancies and enrolment information.

Final Thought

Results Day can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to define your child's future.

Many successful people reached their goals by taking a different route than they first imagined. Whether it's a different college, an apprenticeship, a Foundation Year or resitting an exam, there are usually several paths to success.

The most important thing is to gather the facts, speak to the right people and make informed decisions rather than rushed ones.

At SESMA Martial Arts, we often remind our students that resilience is built when things don't go exactly to plan. Success isn't about never facing setbacks—it's about learning, adapting and finding another way forward. Sometimes life's detours lead to opportunities you never expected.