



On 26 March, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) published additional guidance on the alternative arrangements to GCSE, AS, A level and vocational qualifications in 2021.

URL: [JCQ Guidance on the Determination of Grades for A, AS Levels and GCSEs-Summer 2021](#)

GCSE, AS and A levels

- Given the ongoing disruption to education caused by the Covid-19 pandemic we announced in January that GCSE, AS and A level exams will not go ahead as planned this summer.
- In February, the department confirmed that students will receive grades determined by their teachers, with them only being assessed on what they have been taught, and not what they missed.
- The department has been working closely with JCQ and the awarding organisations who have produced guidance to support the provision of grades to students this summer
- The JCQ guidance, which applies to all exam centres in England offering qualifications regulated by Ofqual, covers quality assurance processes, training for teachers, grading, using grade descriptions and exemplification materials, the use of data to support grading, additional assessment materials, reasonable adjustments, the submission of grades, results and appeals.
- It also provides some additional information for exam centres accepting private candidates.
- There will also be a process to support teachers to do what is needed. Exam boards will conduct checks where grades seem too low or too high. Students will receive results in week commencing 9 August 2021.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

- We must ensure there is as much fairness as possible for VTQ students compared to, where relevant, with their GCSE, AS and A level peers. For those VTQs most similar to GCSE, AS and A levels that are used for progression to further or higher education, results will be awarded using similar arrangements to GCSEs and AS or A levels
- Some VTQs are used to enter directly into employment. Exams or assessments will continue where they are critical to demonstrate occupational or professional competence and can be delivered in line with public health measures. Where the assessment cannot take place safely it will be delayed.
- For smaller qualifications used for progression to further or higher education but are not like GCSEs or A levels in their structure, such as Functional Skills qualifications and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), exams and assessment for these will continue in line with public health measures. Alternative arrangements will be available for those who cannot access the assessments.
- Results for VTQs that support progression to further or higher education will be issued on or before the dates announced for GCSEs and A levels. Results for other types of VTQ will be issued at the usual times during the year.

Key Q&A

How will GCSE, AS and A- level grades be awarded?

- Teachers have the flexibility to use a range of evidence, including the use of optional questions provided by exam boards, mock exams, non-examined assessment (NEA) coursework, or in-class tests set by the school which align closely with the specification.
- Heads of centre must be confident that they have considered the range of evidence used and its relationship with what has been taught, the quality of the evidence and how closely it aligns with specifications and have considered when the evidence was generated and under which conditions, including authenticity.

How will the department support teachers to make fair judgements?

- The department wants teachers to feel supported to make assessments of their students and guidance published will support centres in developing a centre wide policy to ensure fair and consistent grading where possible.
- Optional additional assessment materials developed and provided by the exam boards will include sets of questions organised to help teachers quickly find questions in the topics they have taught. There will be a combination of previously published and unpublished questions, with a proportion of previously unpublished questions in all subjects.
- The questions will be provided to centres accompanied by mark schemes, example responses and, where available, data on past performance to support teachers in making their judgements.

How will vocational qualifications be assessed?

- Guidance on teacher assessed grades for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and other general qualifications is set by individual awarding organisations.
- Awarding organisations will be sharing this information with schools, colleges and other providers over the coming weeks, as well as providing information at individual qualification level on their websites.
- Ofqual is working with awarding organisations to ensure as much consistency as possible across similar qualifications and with GCSE, AS and A level where relevant, to ensure as much fairness as possible for all students.

How will private candidates be awarded a grade?

- We and Ofqual have ensured there is a clear and accessible route for private candidates to receive a grade this year, at the same time as other candidates.
- Private candidates should work with a centre to be assessed on a range of evidence, as other candidates will be. JCQ have issued guidance to support centres assessing private candidates. The range of evidence could include the use of board-provided assessment materials or evidence created with another established education provider. Exceptionally, if insufficient other evidence is available, centres could conduct a recorded oral assessment.
- To support centres with the additional requirements of assessing private candidates this year, and avoid the cost being passed on to candidates, we are providing a grant for centres to claim £200 per private candidate entry.
- These candidates should have the same opportunity as other students to be assessed on what they were taught, and centres can conduct assessments remotely if needed.

How can students have confidence in their grade?

- Teachers will have support and guidance on grading and centres will be quality assured by exam boards. Students will also have multiple chances to show what they know and can do, and will be able to see the evidence their teacher plans to submit for them. Students should therefore feel confident in their teacher assessed grades for this year.
- However, an appeals system will be there as a safety net, in case errors are not picked up earlier in the process.
- If a student believes that they have not been issued with the correct grade, they can ask their centre to check for errors and make sure they have followed their own process correctly. If a student still believes their grade is wrong, the centre should then submit an appeal to the exam board. A student's grade can go up or down on appeal.

Will schools/students have to pay for appeals?

- The government will provide funding to awarding organisations with respect to formal appeals of teacher assessed grades submitted to them by state-funded providers and any providers on behalf of private candidates. These centres will therefore not need to pay a fee to awarding bodies when submitting their appeal.