



Joint Council for  
Qualifications<sup>CIC</sup>

# JCQ Guidance on the determination of grades for A/AS Levels and GCSEs for Summer 2021:

PROCESSES TO BE ADOPTED BY EXAM CENTRES AND SUPPORT  
AVAILABLE FROM AWARDING ORGANISATIONS

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## Introduction

On 4 January 2021, the Government announced that it was no longer fair for the Summer 2021 examination series for GCSE, A/AS Level, Project Qualifications and Advanced Extension Award in maths to go ahead due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The government set out its policy that centres will be submitting students' grades in a letter dated 25 February 2021 ([Direction from the Secretary of State for Education to Ofqual's Chief Regulator](#)). JCQ and the awarding organisations have been working together to prepare guidance and information to support the provision of grades to students this summer by centres.

In developing this guidance, we have:

- taken into consideration the needs of centres and teachers;
- ensured compliance with Ofqual regulations and requirements; and
- tried to minimise administrative burden for centres.

This JCQ guidance provides information in respect of the process, from the creation and submission of a Centre Policy, through the determination of grades, requirements for internal quality assurance procedures, submission of grades to awarding organisations, the external quality assurance process, the issue of results and the appeals process for students.

If necessary, and dependent upon questions raised by exam centres, this document may be updated. Such updates will be clearly marked and widely communicated. This would be to clarify guidance if required, rather than change the guidance itself.

Some of this content requires actions. There is also supporting advice, information and templates to make the submission of a Centre Policy straightforward. While some forms and templates are optional, if not used, a similar approach to record keeping is required.

Individual awarding organisations will issue additional guidance, including support materials at a subject level and information about the submission of grades. The JCQ will also be publishing the detailed guidance for appeals early in the summer term.

The JCQ and awarding organisations want to register their thanks to teachers, heads of centres, exam officers and colleagues across exam centres. We fully recognise the challenge of determining grades for students this year and we hope this guidance, the supporting templates and proformas, will ease the administrative burden and ensure students, their parents, and all those who use the grades awarded can have confidence that they have been determined as fairly and objectively as possible.

### Scope of guidance

The scope of this guidance applies to all exam centres in England offering the following qualifications regulated by Ofqual:

- A and AS Levels
- GCSEs (including short course GCSEs)
- Project Qualifications (L1, L2 and EPQ)
- Advanced Extension Awards (AEA) in maths
- Awarding organisations may specify additional qualifications they wish to be covered by this guidance on a case by case basis.

This guidance also applies to centres in Wales and Northern Ireland who deliver relevant Ofqual-regulated qualifications. It does not apply to qualifications regulated by Qualifications Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland for which further information can be found at:

- CCEA, Northern Ireland: [ccea.org.uk](http://ccea.org.uk)
- WJEC, Wales: [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)

## Other essential documentation

While this guidance lays out the processes, information and support available to centres from the JCQ and the awarding organisations, they must also read and consider the following Ofqual regulations including:

- [\*Guidance: Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021\*](#), Ofqual, 24 March 2021
- [\*Guidance: Information for centres about making objective judgements in relation to awarding qualifications in 2021\*](#), Ofqual February 2021 (Ofqual/21/6749/4)

These documents provide information about how to determine grades, the evidence that should be considered in doing so, and objectivity in grading judgements. Both documents must be read alongside this JCQ document and the arrangements put in place for determining students' grades at each centre must be consistent with the expectations in them.

## Other relevant documentation

This guidance also takes account of a number of additional publications as listed below:

- [\*Direction from the Secretary of State for Education to Ofqual's Chief Regulator\*](#), Department for Education, 25 February 2021
- [\*General Qualifications Alternative Awarding Framework\*](#), Ofqual, 24 March 2021
- [\*Interim Guidance for Centres Accepting Private Candidate Entries for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in Summer 2021\*](#) released on 15 March 2021 has been incorporated into the section on: [\*Guidance for exam centres accepting Private Candidates\*](#).

## Terminology

For clarity the terminology used in this guidance document has been standardised. The terminology used is as follows:

- **Awarding organisations:** this encompasses, 'exam boards' and 'awarding bodies'.
- **Additional assessment materials:** qualification-specific sets of questions covering key knowledge, understanding and skills, provided with mark schemes and mapping grids.
- **Centres:** these are exam centres approved in the National Centre Number register (NCNR).
- **Centre Policy:** the policy sets out the processes centres will follow for determining grades, in an appropriate, consistent and fair way – only one will needed to be submitted for all awarding organisations

- **Centre Policy Summary (Form):** this is an online webform to be completed on the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) summarising Centre Policy, which should also be uploaded when the form is completed – this needs to be completed only once for all awarding organisations unless information is missing or needs to be clarified.
- **Private Candidates:** are students who have not studied with the exam centre that makes their entry.
- **SENCOs:** (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) this encompasses SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) leads in colleges and other relevant experts and assessors.
- **Students:** this means students entered for qualifications in 2021 within the scope of this guidance as outlined above and encompasses ‘candidates’ and ‘students’.
- **Support materials:** to assist in the determination and submission of grades, for example guidance, training, exemplar responses, performance data and grade descriptors.

## What will awarding organisations do?

Awarding organisations will provide centres with a package of support materials to assist in the determination and submission of grades, provide contacts and answer queries. This will include questions, mark schemes, exemplar materials and grade descriptors. Awarding organisations will provide training, support and guidance in a format to be defined; details will be provided by awarding organisations. JCQ will provide a specific learning resource module on Objectivity and Awarding.

Awarding organisations will, in addition to the guidance on [Centre Policies in this document](#), provide a template and guidance on how to submit them. Following submission, awarding organisations will review all Centre Policies and may contact centres if they have any concerns about the approach proposed in relation to any aspect of the process.

Awarding organisations may arrange a virtual visit (via Zoom, Microsoft Teams or an alternative) with centres to provide further support and guidance where questions remain about a Centre Policy.

After the submission of grades, awarding organisations will work together to conduct a quality assurance exercise that will have elements of both targeted and random sampling of centres so that the grades awarded across the system command confidence. Further information can be found in the [quality assurance process](#).

Awarding organisations may have further contact with centres if, following any sampled quality assurance activity, they have concerns in relation to the teacher assessed grades submitted.

Awarding organisations are responsible for determining final grades and awarding qualifications. They will also manage the second stage of appeals.

## What will centres do?

Centres will create and submit a Centre Policy – a pre-populated template option is available [here](#). This will:

- outline the roles and responsibilities of individuals in the centre;
- detail what training and support will be provided to centre staff involved with the process, including any training around bias and objectivity in assessment and grading decisions;
- confirm the approach to be taken when determining teacher assessed grades, including consideration of evidence and how that evidence informs students' grades;
- detail the internal quality assurance processes that are in place;
- detail any provision for Private Candidates, if applicable.

Centres will collaborate with awarding organisations if any concerns are raised following the submission of a Centre Policy. This may include participating in a virtual visit.

Centres will review grades determined by teachers in line with the Centre Policy.

Centres must ensure that students are aware of the evidence used to determine their grade. Although teachers may share results associated with individual pieces of evidence, they must not share with students the grades submitted to awarding organisations before results are released.

Centres must submit teacher assessed grades to the awarding organisations with a Head of Centre Declaration that confirms that the centre complied with its Centre Policy. A declaration form and guidance on how to submit them will be provided by awarding organisations along with information on grade submission.

Centres will collaborate with the awarding organisations where external quality assurance sampling is required, which will include participating in a virtual visit.

Centres will release results to students for qualifications as required by the Department for Education on 10 August for A/AS levels (Level 3 qualifications) and 12 August for GCSE (Level 2 qualifications).

Centres will, on request, conduct the first stage of the appeals process, to check if an administrative or procedural error has occurred. Centres will also be required to submit second stage appeals to the awarding organisation on a student's behalf, if the student continues to believe that an error persists or the grade awarded was an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement. Full details on the appeals process are provided [here](#).

## Timelines and key dates

The overall process for awarding in 2021 is illustrated on the next page. The key dates to be aware of are:

- **22 March to 22 April: Entry amendments** window open for centres
- **31 March:** Additional Assessment Materials (sets of questions, mark schemes and mapping)
- **12 April:** Additional support materials (marking exemplification)
- **12 April to 30 April:** Window for **Centre Policy submission** via proforma on CAP (Centre Admin Portal)
- **19 April:** Additional sets of questions publicly available. Additional support materials (grading exemplification) securely available to centres
- **19 April to 11 June:** Awarding organisations **review Centre Policies and conduct virtual visits** where needed
- **26 April:** Entry deadline for **Private Candidates**
- **26 May to 18 June:** Window for **Teacher Assessed Grades submission** opens via awarding organisations' respective portals
- **18 June to 16 July:** Awarding organisations conduct sample checks of evidence (*\* in exceptional circumstances, sample checks may take place until 23rd July*)
- **10 August:** A/AS Levels and relevant other Level 3 **results day**
- **12 August:** GCSE and relevant other Level 2 **results day**
- **10 August to 7 September:** priority appeals window
  - » **10 August to 16 August:** student requests centre review
  - » **10 August to 20 August:** centre conducts centre review
  - » **11 August to 23 August:** centre submits appeal to awarding organisation
- **10 August to end October:** majority of non-priority appeals take place
  - » **10 August to 3 September:** student requests centre review
  - » **10 August to 10 September:** centre conducts centre review
  - » **11 August to 17 September:** centre submits appeal to awarding organisation

## Where to get awarding organisation information support and guidance

Awarding organisation can be contacted for further advice and information specific to specifications. The links are as follows:

- **AQA:** [www.aqa.org.uk/2021-exam-changes](http://www.aqa.org.uk/2021-exam-changes)
- **WJEC/Eduqas:** <https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/summer-2021-information-and-updates/>
- **OCR:** [www.ocr.org.uk/everything-you-need-to-know-for-summer-2021/](http://www.ocr.org.uk/everything-you-need-to-know-for-summer-2021/)
- **Pearson/Edexcel:** [www.pearson.com/uk/educators/schools/update-for-schools.html](http://www.pearson.com/uk/educators/schools/update-for-schools.html)



## The quality assurance process

The quality assurance process will support centres to construct appropriate processes to underpin the determination of grades. There are internal and external elements to the process.

The starting point of the process is the Centre Policy. This sets out the processes centres will follow for determining grades, in an appropriate, consistent and fair way. The policy should reference all of the relevant external advice and guidance provided by Ofqual, the JCQ and by the awarding organisations. A [template for a Centre Policy](#) is available on the [JCQ website](#), and centres can adopt and adapt this document. Each Head of Centre will then need to produce a summary of the policy which will be submitted to the awarding organisations for review. The [Centre Policy Summary Form](#) can also be previewed online on the JCQ website '[Summer 2021 Arrangements](#)'.

### Internal quality assurance process

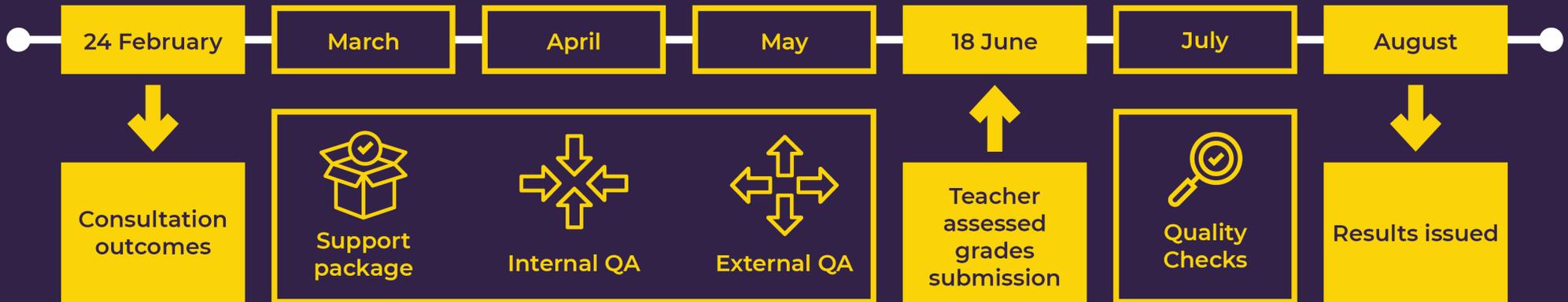
Every centre must produce a Centre Policy; this can simply be done by choosing to adopt or adapt the pre-populated template. Centres will only be expected to produce one full Centre Policy document and complete one Centre Policy Summary Form, even if they have entries with more than one awarding organisation. The Centre Policy Summary Form must be uploaded to the Centre Administration Portal (CAP) by 30th April 2021 and must be signed by the Head of Centre. The full Centre Policy is to be uploaded to the CAP as an attachment. Awarding organisations will contact centres that haven't returned these documents by 30th April 2021, or if they have missing/incomplete information.

The Centre Policy will:

- Outline the roles and responsibilities of individuals in the centre
- Detail the training and support provided for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and training around objectivity in decision making
- Set out the approach for the determination of grades including how evidence will be used
- Describe the process that will be adopted where a potential conflict of interest has been identified, such as where a teacher's relative is a student
- Outline the internal quality assurance processes in place including arrangements to standardise judgements and consider teacher assessed grades against results from previous years when exams have taken place (2017 to 2019)
- Detail any provision for Private Candidates, if applicable.

Exams officers will be provided with further details regarding submission of the policy summary, although the process will be similar to that used in usual exam years for the submission of requests for Reasonable Adjustments through Access Arrangements Online.

# Quality Assurance Process Timeline



**Stage 1**  
 The completion of a Centre Policy; the completion of a Summary form confirming key details of the Policy; the submission of the Summary Form and full Centre Policy to the JCQ; and the review of that Summary Form by the awarding organisations.

**Stage 2**  
 Virtual centre visits conducted where Centre Policy indicates further support and guidance may be required.

**Stage 3**  
 Targeted and random sampling by awarding organisations of Centre Policies and evidence underpinning submitted grades through virtual centre visits.

## **External quality assurance process**

### **STAGE 1 – Centre Policy review**

Following submission awarding organisations will carry out a review of all Centre Policy Summary Forms. This is to ensure the arrangements each centre has in place are appropriate. Awarding organisations may contact centres where they have questions or concerns. At this point, centres will only be contacted by one awarding organisation. It is possible a centre may be contacted by an awarding organisation with which they do not have any entries.

All centres will receive email confirmation that their Centre Policy has been received. Centres do not need to wait for approval before beginning their grading processes. Centres will then receive an email confirming that their policy has been 'Accepted' or that there is a need for follow-up contact. Centres may be contacted by an awarding organisation where there are gaps in the policy or if any clarification is required. An update to the Centre Policy may be requested at this time.

Some centres may not receive any further follow up from awarding organisations. However, quality checks of the full Centre Policy may still be performed at random.

### **STAGE 2 – Virtual centre visits**

Where the Centre Policy suggests that further support and guidance may be required, centres will be contacted to arrange a virtual centre visit by the awarding organisation. These visits will take place in May and June.

Virtual centre visits are to be supportive with the aim of assisting centres to provide valid teacher assessed grades and to ensure the best possible systems are in place. The visits will be conducted virtually. They are likely to be held via Microsoft Teams or Zoom, and details will be confirmed at a later date. Awarding organisations will work with centres to find an alternative if the use of these platforms is not suitable.

Visits will be attended by trained representatives from awarding organisations and senior leaders at centres. Awarding organisations will work with centres to find a suitable time and date. Visits will take the form of a professional conversation and will focus on the process of providing teacher assessed grades.

Normally, centres will participate in one visit with a single awarding organisation. The purpose of this is to have a single point of contact and to ease the burden on centres. This may mean a centre's visit is hosted by an awarding organisation with which they do not have summer 2021 entries.

If an awarding organisation has significant concerns about a specific element of evidence the centre may be asked to remove the evidence and reconsider the grade.

In rare cases, where it is not possible to resolve issues arising from a virtual centre visit, results may be withheld pending further investigation.

### **STAGE 3 – Post-submission sampling**

The final stage of the quality assurance process is to confirm that centres have implemented what was in their submitted policies and that their submitted grades reflect this. The sampling process will provide confidence that the grades awarded by awarding organisations across the system command assurance.

The sampling process will take place following the submission of grades by centres. Targeted sampling will be informed by:

- the outcomes of Stage 1
- Stage 2 policy review checks, where a centre's overall results profile for this year's cohort appears to diverge significantly compared to the profiles for cohorts from previous years when exams have taken place; and
- centres where awarding organisations had concerns about their policy.

In addition, random sampling will ensure appropriate subject/qualification, geographical and centre-type coverage by the awarding organisations.

Sampling after the submission of grades will involve a review of evidence at qualification and subject level by subject specialists.

The sampling process will help ensure that Centre Policies for determination of grades were followed without placing an unreasonable administrative burden on the centre being sampled. Awarding organisations will decide whether to accept the grades submitted by centres or undertake further review. This may lead to the withholding of results.

Centres are expected to work with the awarding organisations at all stages of the quality assurance process. Failure to engage may jeopardise the timely issue of results to students, and may lead to awarding organisations undertaking further investigation (see [Malpractice section](#)).

### Creating the Centre Policy

The first step in the process is for centres to produce a Centre Policy. The policy must provide a summary of a centre's approach to assessment and quality assuring the centre determined grades they award to students, based on the evidence they have produced.

Many centres will have a range of documents outlining their approach to ensuring valid and reliable assessment outcomes for their students, in a standard qualification series. For the purpose of the Summer 2021 series, awarding organisations will require centres to provide a succinct overview of the approach they will take to assessments and quality assurance of grading decisions, by submitting a high-level policy which must contain, as a minimum, the information outlined below.

Centres will initially only be required to provide their Centre Policy, they will not be required to provide other documented procedures, but must reference them in their Centre Policy where they apply. Awarding organisations may ask to review referenced documentation as part of the quality assurance process. Centres must ensure they keep all relevant documentation.

Awarding organisations will require each centre to complete the Centre Policy Summary webform on the CAP portal so that it can be reviewed to ensure that all required areas are addressed. A copy of the Summary of the Centre Policy can be found in [here](#).

### Summary of the Centre Policy

For every centre, the Head of Centre is required to complete the Summary of Centre Policy form and to upload the Centre Policy as an attachment prior to submission. Submission of the Centre Policy must be completed by 30 April 2021. Centres will ensure appropriate oversight according to governance arrangements.

A review of the Centre Policy Summary will be completed by awarding organisations to ensure that the arrangements each centre has in place are appropriate.

All centres will receive confirmation that the Centre Policy has been received.

In cases where awarding organisations have concerns about the arrangements in place, centres may be contacted to arrange a Virtual Centre Visit by the awarding organisation to clarify points in the Centre Policy.

Senior leaders should use the sample content and template included in the annex, alongside the following guidance to develop a Centre Policy that is fit for purpose for their centre.

The final content will reflect the centre's actual practices. Sample content is provided in the Centre Policy Template and centres can amend the sample content as appropriate.

## **Content of the Centre Policy**

It is recommended that the Centre Policy contains the following sections:

### **Statement of intent**

This section of the Centre Policy should outline the purpose of the document, as appropriate to your centre.

It is the responsibility of everyone involved in the determination of teacher assessed grades to read, understand and implement the Centre Policy. On behalf of the centre as a whole, the Head of Centre must confirm compliance with the policy through the submission of the Head of Centre Declaration. Staff must also familiarise themselves with this document and applicable Ofqual guidance in relation to Summer 2021.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

This section of the Centre Policy should outline the personnel in your centre who have specific roles and responsibilities in the process of determining teacher assessed grades this year. For example, you should consider the responsibilities of the following:

- Head of Centre
- Senior Leadership Team and heads of department
- Teachers / Specialist Teachers / SENCO
- Examinations Officer.

### **Training, support and guidance**

This section of the Centre Policy should outline the training, support and guidance that your centre will provide to those determining teacher assessed grades this year.

Teachers involved in determining grades should be provided with centre-based training to help achieve consistency and fairness to all students. Teachers should engage fully with all training and support that has been provided by the JCQ and the awarding organisations.

Additional support and, where appropriate, quality assurance measures should be provided by the head of department for newly qualified teachers or single person departments. This will be agreed on a case-by-case basis but may include, for example, Senior Leaders or the Head of Centre validating the outcomes after comparing with outcomes in associated subject areas where applicable. In the case of small subject departments, heads of department may choose to collaborate with neighbouring centres for additional support.

### **The use of appropriate evidence**

This section of the Centre Policy should set out how much regard will be given to the JCQ Guidance to Teachers on Grading.

Ofqual have produced guidance on recommended evidence which can be found [here](#).

### **Determining teacher assessed grades**

This section of the Centre Policy should outline the approach the centre will take to awarding teacher assessed grades.

Full details of how teacher assessed grades should be awarded is provided in the guidance on [grading for teacher's section](#).

### **Internal and external quality assurance**

These sections of the Centre Policy should outline:

- the approach the centre will take to ensure internal standardisation of teacher assessed grades, to ensure consistency, fairness and objectivity of decisions; and
- the arrangements in place to comply with the awarding organisations' arrangements for external quality assurance of centre-determined grades in a timely and effective way.

Full details of how internal quality assurance should be applied is provided in the [Internal quality assurance process section](#). Further details of the requirements for external quality assurance are provided in the [External quality assurance process section](#).

### **Comparison of grades to results for previous cohorts**

This section of the Centre Policy should outline the approach the centre will take to describe how results from previous cohorts will be used to draw comparisons with teacher assessed grades in 2021.

After the grading judgements have been made, centres should compare the grades for this year's cohort to cohorts from previous years when exams have taken place (2017 to 2019).

Regard should be given to the section [using data in this guide](#), about how to compare grades to previous years' distributions, the level of expected variability of outcomes over time, and relevant limitations of such comparisons, including where centres are small or entries in a subject are small, for instance.

Where there is significant divergence from the qualification-level, i.e. AS/A Level and GCSE profiles attained in previous examined years, Heads of Centre should prepare a succinct commentary which addresses this disparity and highlights the reasons for it. This commentary will need to be available for subsequent review.

### **Access Arrangements and Special Consideration**

This section of the Centre Policy should outline the approach the centre will take to provide students with appropriate access arrangements and applying special consideration in particular instances.

Further guidance relating to Access Arrangements and Special Consideration can be found in the section [Reasonable adjustments, access arrangements and special consideration](#).

### **Addressing disruption**

This section of the Centre Policy should outline the approach for addressing disruption by students within the centre.

Grades will be based on teachers' assessments of the standard at which students are performing and will be based on the student's demonstrated knowledge and skills. It is important to remember that students do not have to have completed a mandated amount of content or demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding across every area of the specification as they would normally.

Teachers will grade each student on their performance in the subject content they have been taught and will base their assessment on the student's demonstrated knowledge and skills.

While there is no set requirement for the minimum amount of content that students must have been taught, Heads of Centres will be required to confirm that students have been taught sufficient content to form the basis for a grade.

If the content for any of the pieces of evidence have not been taught, then the teacher should remove that piece of evidence entirely or remove the questions that assess that specific content. If teachers need to remove any evidence at this point, they should consider whether they need to and can replace it with anything else.

### ***Objectivity***

In this section of the policy, centres should outline the arrangements in place to ensure objectivity of decisions.

Each teacher assessed grade should be a holistic professional judgement, balancing different sources of evidence and data. It is important that the centre's grading judgements are objective; they should only take account of existing records and available evidence of a student's knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the subject.

Ofqual have published [Information for centres about making objective judgements](#). In writing this section of the Centre Policy, centres must refer to this guidance.

### ***Recording decisions and retention of evidence and data***

In this section of the policy, centres should outline the arrangements in place to record decisions, retain evidence and data.

Information about the retention of evidence can be found in the box on [retention of evidence](#).

Further guidance on the use of data can be found in the section on [Using data to support the grading process](#).

### ***Authenticating evidence***

This section of the Centre Policy should outline the centre's approach to authenticating student evidence and ensuring that work used in support of the teacher assessed grade is the student's own.

Robust mechanisms should be in place to ensure that Teachers are confident that work used as evidence is the students' own and that no inappropriate levels of support have been given to students to complete it, either within the centre or with external tutors.

Awarding organisations will be investigating instances where it appears evidence is not authentic.

## Confidentiality, Malpractice and Maladministration, and conflicts of interest

These sections of the Centre Policy should outline:

- the measures in place to ensure confidentiality of the grades determined by the centre and to make students aware of the range of evidence on which those grades will be based;
- the measures in place to prevent malpractice and other breaches of exam regulations, and to deal with such cases when they occur; and
- the measures in place to address potential conflicts of interest.

## Private Candidates

This section of the Centre Policy should outline your approach to working with Private Candidates to arrive at appropriate grade.

Further guidance on Private Candidates can be found in the section - [Guidance for exam centres accepting Private Candidates](#).

## Results

This section of the Centre Policy should outline your approach to the receipt and issue of results to students and the provision of necessary advice and guidance.

Further guidance on Results can be found in the section on [Results](#).

## Appeals

This section of the Centre Policy should outline your approach to Appeals, to ensure that they are handled swiftly and effectively, and in line with JCQ requirements.

The [guidance on appeals](#) provides an overview of the grounds and stages of the appeals process.

## **Centre Policy portability between UK jurisdictions**

For centres located in a UK jurisdiction other than England, i.e. Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, and are entering candidates for CCEA/SQA/WJEC awards a Centre Policy, or equivalent, should already have been completed for the relevant awarding organisation. In these circumstances it is not necessary to complete a separate Centre Policy for Ofqual regulated qualifications provided by AQA, OCR, and Pearson, and the Centre Policy, or equivalent, previously submitted to CCEA/SQA or WJEC will be acceptable. It is only necessary for Heads of Centre to outline their approach where the requirements for Ofqual-regulated qualifications differ from those pertaining in other jurisdictions, for example the requirement of non-disclosure of grades determined by centres to students.

An appropriate section at the end of the Centre Policy template has been added and the rest of the template does not have to be completed.

## Guidance on grading for teachers

Heads of Centre should ensure that students have the opportunity to show the full breadth of their knowledge and understanding in each subject based on what they have been taught. It is important that grades represent a holistic, objective judgement based on evidence of each student's performance in each subject. Evidence should be used consistently across the class or cohort wherever possible. The evidence can be of different types and can come from across the course of study. This guidance should support the consideration of the different factors that need to be accounted for when making a judgement about the grade.

Centres should also refer to Ofqual's guidance, [Information for centres about making objective judgements](#). Teachers are expected to have reviewed the [GCSE](#) and [AS/A Level](#) grade descriptors and exemplification materials provided by awarding organisations before grading students.

The following steps may be helpful when making grading decisions.

### ***Step 1: Consider what has been taught***

Look at the specification that has been taught to consider:

- what content has been taught?
- what content has not been taught to this cohort because of the impact of the pandemic?
- has the content that has been taught been covered deeply or superficially?

The evidence used to make judgements must only include the appropriate assessment of content that has been taught.

### ***Step 2: Collect the evidence***

Consider what evidence there is of student performance, potentially collected over the course of study, to make a holistic judgement of each student's performance on a range of evidence relating to the qualification's specification content that they have been taught. Ofqual's guidance on recommended evidence *Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021*, includes:

- Student work produced in response to assessment materials provided by the awarding organisation, including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials such as practice or sample papers.
- Non-exam assessment (NEA) work (often referred to as coursework), even if this has not been fully completed.
- Student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification, that follow the same format as awarding organisation materials and have been marked in a way that reflects awarding organisation mark schemes. This can include:
  - » substantial class or homework<sup>1</sup> (including work that took place during remote learning);
  - » internal tests taken by students; and/or
  - » mock exams taken over the course of study.

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<sup>1</sup> Teachers should have confidence that any homework used is the work of the student.

- Records of a student's capability and performance over the course of study in performance-based subjects such as music, drama and PE.
- Records of each student's standard of work over the course of study.

In some limited circumstances, where other evidence is not available or possible to create, an oral assessment may be an appropriate form of evidence. This form of assessment may be needed, for example, where a candidate has little available evidence, is unable to attend an assessment in person and it is not possible to arrange a remote written assessment. If this is used, the assessment should be recorded so that it can be referred to later during internal and external quality assurance and, where necessary, the centre review and appeals process. The focus of the assessment should be to assess the student's knowledge and skills as required by the specification.

Further guidance on completing NEA and assessing incomplete NEA and use of alternative evidence is available [here](#).

Assessments used might be produced by awarding organisations, third parties or they might be teacher-devised tasks.

It is not necessary for every aspect of the specification to be assessed to arrive at a grade. The aim is to include evidence that assesses the student's ability across a reasonable range of subject content reflecting, where possible, all assessment objectives, as set out in qualification specifications. Consider whether the evidence available is sufficient to support the judgement that is being made. If not, what additional assessment might be needed? Could the assessment materials provided by the awarding organisations be used to supplement or help to confirm performance of previous assessments?

Ideally, the evidence used will be consistent across the class or cohort but that may not always be the case if a student has missed some teaching, or one or more assessments, for valid reasons. All students will have had slightly different learning experiences (for example, missing lessons). For most students, consistency in the use of evidence is expected, and a differentiated approach is not warranted. In cases where students have experienced significant disruption, however, some flexibility may be required. Each student must be made aware of the evidence that is going to be used and understand that the range of evidence used to determine a grade is not negotiable.

Although there is no minimum requirement of content that students must have been taught, Heads of Centre will be required to confirm that students have been taught sufficient content to form the basis for a grade.

## Retention of evidence

It is important that evidence on which a student's grade is based, including copies of the student's work where available and any mark records, is retained safely by the centre; it will be needed to:

- » support the centre's determination of students' grades;
- » the internal and external quality assurance processes; and
- » the appeals process.

Scanned copies of handwritten evidence or other digital documentation will be acceptable. Centres must also retain any information relating to a student's access arrangements, or personal circumstances affecting student performance, which might need to be taken into account during the process of determining a student's grade. Centres should keep records of student evidence and a record of any discussions with students around the evidence on which grades will be based readily accessible so it can be found if a student wishes to appeal their grade.

If some evidence of students' work is not available, the marks can still be used in determining the final grade. The evidence that is available can be considered by the awarding organisations if the student decides to appeal.

### ***Step 3: Evaluate the quality of the evidence***

Ofqual's guidance document, on [Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades](#), gives guidance on how to balance the different sources of evidence when making a grading decision. In addition to that guidance, consideration should be given to the following:

- Coverage of assessment objectives;
- Coverage of content;
- Authenticity – is the evidence the student's own work?
- Level of control – was it taken in timed conditions? Was there an opportunity for redrafting? Was it supervised?
- Marking – how much support was available when applying the mark scheme? What internal standardisation processes have been applied?

While there is no one type of evidence that takes precedence, evidence gathered in conditions that enable confidence about the authenticity of the students' work will give more confidence in the overall holistic judgement. More recent evidence is likely to be more representative of student performance, although there may be exceptions.

#### Step 4: Establish whether the proposed range of evidence is appropriate for all students

Wherever possible the same range of evidence should be used for all students in a class or cohort, although there may be individual students for whom the proposed evidence is not appropriate. The rationale for any exceptions must be documented by the centre.

Each student must only be graded on their performance based on the subject content they have been taught. Before finalising grading decisions, teachers should satisfy themselves that each student has been taught the content in line with the proposed evidence. Students must be told what evidence is going to be used, so that they have the opportunity to raise any genuine and valid concerns. It is recommended that any student's views are recorded and documented along with reasons for the final decision.

Some students may have missed a section of teaching due to valid reasons such as bereavement or long-term illness, or it may be the case that reasonable adjustments or access arrangements weren't in place for a particular assessment. Where such adjustments/arrangements weren't in place, teachers must consider whether to either:

- a. use the evidence when assigning a grade on the basis that it is the most appropriate evidence available, and disregarding it would disadvantage the student – if this is the case, the impact must be accounted for at stage 5 (see below), and the rationale recorded; or
- b. use alternative evidence to replace assessments that are not appropriately representative of individual students' performance and if so, document decisions appropriately.

#### Step 5: Assign a grade

**Teachers' grading decisions will be subject to a school or college's overall quality assurance processes.**

Grades should be based on a holistic, objective judgement of the evidence of the students' performance on the subject content they have been taught. **Consider the quality of the work in relation to the assessment materials used as well as the grade descriptors and grading exemplification available to help reach a final grade.** These materials exemplify the established performance standard that is maintained each year by awarding organisations and is to be applied in grading judgements this summer. This will help to ensure that there is a common basis to all teacher assessed grades. It should be no easier or more difficult for a student to achieve a grade this year based on their performance than in previous years, as outlined in Ofqual's *Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021*. Further information on the descriptors and grading exemplification is provided in the next section.

Decisions about potential must not factor in the student's grades. For example, if all the evidence collected for a student is of grade 6 and 7 standard, there would be no reason to consider providing that student any other grades. Further guidance on making holistic grading decisions is provided in the supporting document: [Worked examples to assist teachers making grading decisions](#).

Finally, teachers should reflect on their judgements. Refer to Ofqual's guidance, *Information for centres about making objective judgements in relation to awarding qualifications in 2021*.

Additional points about grading:

- Ensure that the grades represent a holistic judgement. The grading process this year is not intended to be a formulaic calculation, and should account for the context in which each student's evidence has been produced.
- For tiered GCSEs, your grade must reflect the tier of entry.
- At GCSE, to achieve grade 1, students' evidence will show that they have demonstrated engagement with sufficient content, achieved some credit across elements of the specification content, and achieved credit in some assessment objectives. Where the evidence for a student does not support this, the student should be graded unclassified (U). At AS and A level, student should be graded unclassified (U) if their evidence does not meet the minimum requirements of most of the statements within the grade E descriptor.
- Reasonable adjustments for disabled students and access arrangements should have been in place when evidence was generated. Where they were not, centres should consider using other evidence or take it into account when coming to their judgement. Where appropriate, this should include input from relevant specialist teachers and other professionals and it must be appropriately recorded/documentated.
- Special consideration requests will not apply in the usual way this summer because students will not be taking their exams. However, where illness or other personal circumstances might have temporarily affected performance, for example in mock exams, centres should bear that in mind when making their judgements (see stage 4, above). Another opportunity may be made available to replace that evidence with another piece where there is a justified rationale and recorded for doing so.
- Note that teachers are not making grading decisions in isolation. Once grades have been assigned, centres' internal quality assurance process will ensure that standards are appropriate prior to sign-off by the Head of Centre.

## **Using grade descriptors and exemplification**

Grade descriptors and grading exemplification must be used to make holistic judgements about student performance.

### **The grade descriptors**

Grade descriptors are general statements that give a high-level reflection of student performance characteristics. They are based on the assessment objectives for the relevant specification. Assessment objectives are found in the relevant subject specification. The grade descriptors apply to all awarding organisations.

### **The grading exemplification**

Each awarding organisation has created grading exemplification for each specification. This will be made available by each awarding organisation by 19 April. The grading exemplification uses student responses from historical examination scripts (and other sources) to illustrate mid-grade performance in previous summer series in which exams took place. The exemplification gives examples of the standards you will use to make grading judgements.

Grading exemplification is specific to each awarding organisation. It should be familiar and reflect the specification that you have taught.

For GCSE English Language and Mathematics, exemplification has also been provided for Grade 3. This will support you in making decisions between a Level 1/2 pass.

### Using the descriptors and exemplification

A holistic judgement about the grade will be made based on the evidence.

### Using the grade descriptors

Grade descriptors will help identify how the range of evidence for a student aligns with the expected performance standards.

Review the evidence. Read through the grade descriptors. Match the student's evidence to the suitable statements within the grade descriptors.

A student's collection of evidence may contain characteristics from different grade descriptors. For example, a student may show characteristics of a Grade 6 in one area, and characteristics of a Grade 2 in another area. For assistance with making grading decisions in such situations, please refer to *Worked examples to assist teachers making grading decisions*.

These grade descriptors do not highlight performance characteristics for all grades. Teachers should determine the grade most appropriate for the standard of work produced by a student and must consider the full range of grades available when doing so. When considering which grade is most appropriate, consider:

- Each descriptor contains several statements describing features of typical performance at a grade, against which a student's evidence can be reviewed. If a student's evidence securely matches the statements in a specific grade (eg Grade 6), consider the next descriptor above (eg Grade 8).
- If a student's evidence goes beyond aspects of the statements at grade 6 in some areas, but does not match any (or few) of the statements in the higher descriptor (eg Grade 8), then the teacher can provide the intermediary grade, where one exists (eg Grade 7).
- The same logic can apply across the grade range (eg Grade D for AS and A level).
- Where a student's evidence has been graded, this may provide further assurance for the decision on a student's grade.

**At GCSE, if a student's performance is stronger than the grade descriptors for a grade 8, you should consider assigning a grade 9.**

**At A level, if a student's performance is stronger than the grade descriptors for a grade A, you should consider assigning a grade A\*.**

Evidence should be compared with the exemplification provided by awarding organisations.

Exemplification will not cover all areas of the specification. The same standard, as illustrated in the exemplification, must be applied to other pieces of student evidence.

### Reaching a grade judgement

Professional experience and judgment will form a key part of this process. Due consideration must be given to all the evidence collected for each student.

You should make a holistic judgement where evidence crosses grade descriptors, balancing coverage of differently graded work across the course of study and accounting for conditions in which evidence was collected.

### The use of tracking data and predicted grades in reaching grading decisions

One source of data which is available to centres is tracking systems, that provide target grades or predicted grades based on assessment inputs and data modelling. As the policy direction is that the final grade is derived solely based on performances produced by students, a grade derived based on a predicted trajectory or target grade is not permitted.

For example:

- if a student is currently performing consistently at a grade B standard, they should be awarded a grade B; and
- if a student's tracking data shows improvement over the year, having produced grade C level work in the first half of the year, and grade B work thereafter, the student should be awarded a grade B, even if a tracking system suggests that the candidate could potentially have achieved a grade A based on their trajectory.

## Using data to support the grading process

### Introduction

Used appropriately, data on historical student and centre performance can help support the internal quality assurance process for assigning grades. The purpose of reviewing data on past performance is **not** to attempt to determine a student or a centre's outcomes this summer, but as one source of evidence from examination series which operated as normal, that can inform teachers' professional judgement on the level of attainment achieved by their students.

Accordingly, centres are advised to consider the profile of their results in previous years **in which exams have taken place**, as outlined in Ofqual's *Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021*. Centres can use this to undertake a high-level check once grades have been assigned to students, to ensure that they have applied a consistent standard in their assessment of the 2021 cohort compared to previous years in which exams took place.

Centres must ensure that grade judgements have been recorded for students in the current assessments before considering historical records of mark data and grade distributions for students in previous assessments at the centre.

New centres will not have any historical data, so will need to focus attention on other aspects of quality assurance. If a centre has changed status, merged, or split in recent years, it will need to be taken into account when considering what data to collate.

### The use of data in reviewing overall centre outcomes

Centres should be aware of the distribution of grades awarded to students in previous June series where exams have taken place. However, grading judgements should not be driven by this data. Historical grade data should only be considered after grading judgements have been made.

### What data needs to be considered?

Centres are advised to compile information on the grades awarded to students in past June series in which exams took place (2017 to 2019), where they can be confident that a consistent national standard was applied. The usefulness of this information will depend on the following:

- The size of the centre's cohort from year to year – the larger the cohort, the more useful the data could be.
- The stability of the centre's overall grade outcomes from year to year – the more stable the outcomes are, the more confident the centre can be that variation would likely be low in 2021, had exams taken place.

This information should be compiled for each grade, for each subject/qualification and for each centre as a whole, as it is important to consider both subject and centre level variation during the internal quality assurance review. It is likely that the size of the cohort and the stability of the outcomes will be higher for all subjects combined than for a single subject.

Prior to 2019, GCSE students may have received a mixture of A\*-G and 9-1 grades. Where necessary, consider outcomes at the points of alignment between the two grade scales: 7/A, 4/C and 1/G when compiling historical data. This [guide from Ofqual](https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2018/03/02/gcse-9-to-1-grades-a-brief-guide-for-parents/) illustrates how the grade scales relate to each other.

<https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2018/03/02/gcse-9-to-1-grades-a-brief-guide-for-parents/>

When collating the information, centres should compile and review data across multiple years even if a centre changed awarding organisation in a subject. Grades from international GCSEs (for example, in mathematics) should be included if a centre offered such qualifications previously. Centres may also wish to bring together other data sources that may help quality assure the grades determined in 2021.

When aggregating outcomes across all subjects, centres should consider omitting subjects that are no longer offered from the historical data, to provide a more valid comparison with the grades derived in 2021. Where centres have taken on private candidates in previous series, and/or in the current series, they should generally be excluded from this data.

Looking at centre's outcomes over a three-year period in which exams took place (2017 to 2019), at subject and at centre level, may be a good approach to benchmarking outcomes for 2021. This will help when considering year-on-year fluctuations in outcomes. In instances where there are fewer years of historical data, however, this is still likely to be useful.

The June 2020 series should not be used for benchmarking purposes, as the last consistent set of national standards was set in 2019. The centre assessment grades used as a basis for final outcomes in June 2020 were based on a different consideration to that for the current series. In June 2020, centres were asked to provide the grade that they considered the student would most likely have achieved had exams taken place. In 2021, grades must be based on the evidence produced by students. Therefore centres should consider how 2020 outcomes related to the centre's historical outcomes before referring to them as part of the internal review.

### **Internal quality assurance: using the data to inform the overall review of outcomes**

After all grading decisions have been made, centres should review the aggregate cumulative grade distribution for each subject, and qualification type (e.g. GCSE, A level). If outcomes are much higher than in previous years, or much lower, the reasons for it should be considered. Identify evidence for any recurring trends in the profile of performance at the centre over previous years, such as strong results for some subjects or specific student groups. Comparisons should be contextualised with other information at centre level, for example data that suggests the cohort in a particular subject, or overall, is more or less able than in previous years (where exams have taken place) – for example, tracking data, prior assessment data, or a change in the profile of the cohort.

Also consider the grades awarded to different groups of students, including those with protected characteristics, as well as considering gender and disadvantage. Is each group's grade profile different from previous years, or compared with other groups? If so, why is that the case? Take particular care when assessing patterns of grades for small groups, where a single candidate may have a large effect.

It is recommended that a centre makes a record of these comparisons and the rationale for any variations as part of the internal quality assurance process, in order that it can be discussed with the awarding organisation during any external quality assurance checks.

It is possible that, following this review, centres may need to reflect on the grading standard that your teachers have applied in one or more subjects. Do not, however, apply any historical insights inconsistently to students within a subject. If an issue is identified which cuts across several or most subjects, a review across all subjects may be needed. **At all times, however, remember that it is the evidence of students' work that must form the basis for each student's grade.** For example, the fact that no student at a centre might have achieved an A\* at A level, or a grade 1 at GCSE, in previous years is not a valid barrier to awarding these grades to a student who has demonstrated attainment to that level.

## **Once the review is complete**

If a centre is selected for a quality assurance visit, they may be asked to provide a statement explaining the rationale of the outcomes by subject and/or qualification type level. This must include details of how they compare in previous years in which exams were sat, and an explanation for this – for example, if the centre’s cohort were known to be particularly strong or weak relative to previous years; any changes at the centre that might have contributed to the level of attainment achieved by students in particular subjects; or the size of the cohort means that comparisons between years are considered unreliable.

## Guidance on the use of additional assessment materials for 2021

Each awarding organisation will provide additional assessment materials for use in Summer 2021. These materials are not exams but can be used to generate evidence to help determine a grade for each student. Use of these materials is optional and the extent to which these materials are relied upon to inform decision-making may vary across centres. They are intended to provide evidence of knowledge or to validate a previous assessment. Where appropriate assessment evidence is already available from the course of study, there is no need to replace this with new evidence.

Awarding organisations' existing assessment materials (including past papers and examiners' reports) will all be available as normal. In addition, the following materials will be made available to centres:

- **31 March:** Additional Assessment Materials (sets of questions, mark schemes and mapping)
- **12 April:** Additional support materials (marking - exemplification)
- **19 April:** Additional support materials (grading exemplification) and additional sets of questions will be made publicly available

These additional assessment materials (sets of questions, mark schemes and mapping grids) may be used at any point from 31 March until the date grades are submitted to awarding organisations. The additional sets of questions and mapping grids will be made openly available (beyond centres) after Easter (on 19 April). Sufficient time must be allowed to follow each centre's internal quality assurance processes before grades are submitted to the awarding organisation by 18 June.

### What are the 2021 additional assessment materials?

- The 2021 assessment materials are qualification-specific sets of questions covering key knowledge, understanding and skills (made available by 31 March).
- The materials are available for all GCSE, AS and A levels, with the exception of Art and Design.
- They are drawn from a variety of examination questions and from a range of papers; they do not cover any NEA components.
- The number, breadth and depth of the material will vary between subjects, and reflect the characteristics of each qualification (e.g. where there is only one exam component there will be fewer materials than for a subject which is usually assessed entirely by examination). However, the assessments will draw on the equivalent of three series' worth of examination material, as a minimum.

Additional support materials will also be provided. The number and nature of these may vary and will correspond to the number, breadth and depth of the assessment materials as per the above. The additional support will, where available, include exemplar responses and links to other information which will help with using and marking these assessment materials.

Awarding organisations will also provide subject specific mapping grids by 31 March. These documents will:

- map coverage of assessment objectives, content and/or skills covered within each set of questions;
- direct centres to where the question originally came from, allowing them to access further support materials as required; and
- indicate where pre-existing modified versions of items are available from awarding organisations (see later section on modifying material).

### **What is the purpose of additional assessment materials?**

The additional assessment materials are an optional part of the range of evidence that can be used to decide on each student's grade. They are made up of a mixture of past material (both material already openly published and material currently only available to centres) and new material where required. They are presented in a different format to make them more flexible and adaptable, enabling you to select appropriate content to use with your students. These materials will assist you in assessing student performance in areas not assessed elsewhere. Their use will allow students to demonstrate their performance towards the end of their course of study.

### **How and when should additional assessment materials be used?**

These materials may be used in a variety of ways, at any point after they are released. For example, they could be set as a test, including remotely if required, or as a class or homework activity. However, if this work is going to contribute towards the determination of a student's grade, it must represent their own work.

In particular the materials could be used to:

- give students the opportunity to show what they know, understand or can do in an area of content that has been taught but not yet assessed;
- give students an opportunity to show improvement e.g. to validate or replace an existing piece of evidence; and
- support consistency of judgement between teachers or classes within a centre by giving students the same task to complete where appropriate (and with Reasonable Adjustments made where required).

Assessment materials may be used in the form provided or tailored to better match the content that has been taught. Teachers can decide which activities should be completed, with the task being set, the student work collected and then marked using the accompanying mark scheme - drawing on other available support materials where provided. Centres should have arrangements in place to ensure consistent application of the marking schemes across different departments and/or sites (as described in [Internal quality assurance process](#)).

Although the materials are organised as groups of questions, there is the option to tailor the materials in line with the content that has been taught. Different materials may be combined and/or elements that are not required can be removed. For example, if a multi-part question includes a part which focuses on an element of the specification that hasn't been covered, it may be removed and the marks available reduced accordingly.

Once all the students' work has been marked, if there is reason to believe an outcome doesn't reflect a student's usual level of performance, because of a specific circumstance – for example because of the conditions the student completed the work in – it doesn't have to be included in your range of evidence. Other evidence could be used, or the student could be given another opportunity to complete a different piece of work. Reference should be made to the [Guidance on grading for teachers](#) to understand whether evidence is sufficient to award a grade. Reasons for any decisions must be recorded.

### **Do these materials need to be administered in exam conditions?**

No. These materials are not exams and they do not need to be completed under examination conditions. A group of questions could be set as a classroom test or as homework, for example. Activities could be administered remotely, for example if a student is self-isolating or conditions require it. These are flexible activities, but students' performance should be considered in the light of the conditions in which the activity was completed.

Where an activity is completed under supervision, for example, the time the student has spent on the task, what materials have helped them and whether they have received any additional support, is known. These facts should be considered in assessing student performance and recorded as appropriate.

A student's normal access arrangements should be considered and implemented when work is set, especially if it is to be taken under timed, test conditions. Please see the section on [Reasonable adjustments, access arrangements and special consideration](#) of this document.

### **What if students have seen some of this material before?**

These materials are not exams, nor are they designed to play the role of exams. The materials will be published openly after students return from the Easter break except in cases where copyright law would prevent the materials being made publicly available.

It is understood that students may have seen some material previously. The purpose of any materials should be considered before they are included in the range of evidence. It would be inappropriate to advise students on the content of any up-coming assessment. If a student has recently completed a particular activity there may be little benefit to them completing the same or a very similar activity again.

Sets of questions do not need to be kept securely (as exam papers would be) but the extent to which students should know what activity they will complete in advance should be considered. Additionally, if it is decided that all students in a cohort sit the same activity under test conditions, this should happen on the same day to maximise fairness for all students in a centre.

### **What support materials will be provided?**

Support materials may also include:

- past examiners reports;
- marked examples of student work from past papers where they exist and support the marking of student work;
- links to other information which will help with using and marking these assessment materials.

For qualifications with tiered assessments or questions with variable levels of demand, the assessment set should allow for differentiation between the performance range of the cohort or class. For example, if an assessment is very easy, many of the students may get full marks, which may not help in the grading decisions. Where appropriate, awarding organisations will include information about the demand of particular questions or their targeting to support the selection of materials. This will include indicating the tier the items came from where the qualification normally has tiered exams, and any cross-over items between the two tiers.

### **Understanding the outcomes**

The assessment materials are groups of questions focused on discrete areas of a specification and may vary in breadth and demand depending on the topic. Therefore, unlike full past papers, there are no grade boundaries available. There is no requirement for the mark from an assessment to be converted into a grade, the mark should be considered alongside other pieces of evidence. Any gaps in the range of evidence should be considered when the materials are selected. For example, reference could be made to the grade descriptors for the subject and target a particular aspect of the grade descriptor to ensure the appropriateness of the grading decision. This would be particularly relevant where an area of the specification referenced in the descriptor has been taught, but not yet evidenced.

### Reasonable adjustments and access arrangements

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs), SEND leaders and assessors have previously been advised to continue to process online applications as if examinations were taking place this summer. This will formalise the arrangements for the student's assessments and will ensure consistency with the Equality Act 2010.

An online application may be processed after 31 March 2021 provided the student meets the published criteria for the arrangement and the full supporting evidence is available for inspection.

Every effort must be made to ensure that students' approved access arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments are put in place for any assessments used to determine teacher assessed grades. This applies regardless of whether the access arrangement/reasonable adjustment was approved online or delegated to centres. This includes such things as the use of a reader or supervised rest breaks.

The use of access arrangements/reasonable adjustments must be discussed with specialist teachers (where appropriate), students and parents/carers in advance of any additional evidence being gathered. This will ensure that all parties are aware of the arrangements the centre is making to ensure accessibility of the assessments.

Teachers will be required to confirm whether the approved access arrangement/reasonable adjustment was in place for assessments which will be used to determine the student's grade. This must be recorded on the Assessment Record. It is better not to use evidence if access arrangements were not in place when they were meant to be.

Centres must securely hold on file all evidence used to determine the teacher assessed grades including access arrangements/reasonable adjustments provided, until the published deadline for appeals has passed. However, if a student's result is subject to an on-going appeal, malpractice investigation or other results enquiry after the published deadline for appeals, then the evidence must be retained until this has been completed.

If the access arrangement/reasonable adjustment was not in place, the teacher must record the reason for this and be able demonstrate that this was taken into account when making their final judgement.

The range of evidence is flexible and can be tailored to an individual student according to coverage of the specification.

Centres are encouraged to share all access arrangements evidence where a student is transitioning between centres. The entering centre must check the paperwork and ensure that the arrangement is still appropriate, practicable and reasonable.

The JCQ publication [Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#)<sup>2</sup> provides further detailed information.

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2 [https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/AA\\_regs\\_20-21\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/AA_regs_20-21_FINAL.pdf)

## Special consideration

The usual process of centres submitting special consideration applications to awarding organisations for qualifications will not apply this summer.

As the range of evidence is flexible and can be tailored to an individual student according to coverage of the specification, then instances of special consideration should be limited. Centres should be able to select work completed by a student where they were unaffected by adverse circumstances.

Where this is not possible and a temporary illness, a temporary injury or some other event outside of the student's control may have affected their performance in assessments which will be used to determine a grade, teachers should take this into account and document how they have done so. Special consideration cannot be applied due to lost teaching and learning. This can be addressed through the flexibility of the range of evidence centres may use to determine students' grades. Students should only be assessed on the content of the specification covered.

Centres must be satisfied that the issue or event has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a student's ability to demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment.

Centres must record how they determined the impact of the misfortune.

Students must be reminded to raise any mitigating circumstances which warrant special consideration. It is important that students raise these issues as soon as possible, ideally **at the time of the assessment and prior to the submission of the teacher assessed grade**.

## Guidance for centres on modifying sets of questions

The JCQ member awarding organisations believe that centres are best placed to modify the sets of questions provided as additional assessment materials to cater for individual student needs. Centres will know the needs of their students and their normal ways of working. Centres will be experienced in modifying assessment materials for use in the classroom, for internal tests and mock examinations.

The awarding organisations have indicated where modifications have been created for the sets of questions. Centres should use past papers where possible to access these previously modified materials. Past modified question papers can be accessed at:

- **AQA:** <https://extranet.aqa.org.uk/>
- **Eduqas:** WJEC ([www.wjecservices.co.uk](http://www.wjecservices.co.uk)) – Past papers may be found within 'Resources', then 'Past Papers and Marking Schemes'.
- **OCR:** <https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/past-paper-finder/>
- **Pearson:** <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/exams/past-papers.html>

## Appropriate adjustments for students with visual impairments

Centres will need to ensure that they meet their obligations as per the Equality Act 2010. Appropriate reasonable adjustments should be made to any additional assessment materials used in centres. To ensure this, SENCOs should continue to liaise with teaching and other centre staff to ensure the most suitable arrangements for students with visual impairments. Appropriate adjustments might include:

- the use of a computer reader for tests which are predominately text based
- the use of a reader
- enlarging assessment material on screen
- the use of a 'colour namer', particularly in a subject such as Geography where there are maps.

The JCQ publication [Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#) provides detailed information.

### Advice on providing written or verbal descriptions of images

- Before providing a written or verbal description of a picture, remember to read the question that goes with the image. This will help to describe only the necessary detail.
- Always give the context to the image. For example, "this is an article from a website about running" or "this is a photograph of snowy mountains."
- Always describe what you see in the picture. For example, "there is a picture of a woman running. She is wearing a tracksuit and trainers." Remember to keep your sentences short and name the things that are needed to answer the question.
- Always avoid interpretation or assumption. For example, say "a woman and child" rather than a "mother and daughter."

### Advice on creating sets of questions from awarding organisations' past papers

- Centres will be able to copy and paste text and questions and then ensure the font is the correct size, bold and in Arial. It is recommended that for questions with mathematical fractions, equations, tables, graphs and images the relevant questions are printed from the past papers. Remember to have all material per question from the question paper, source booklet and diagram book.
- A4 18 point bold can be enlarged to A3 24 point bold.
- A4 24 point bold can be enlarged to A3 36 point bold.
- If material is to be used with read/write text to speech technology, for text questions you will be able to copy and paste as above. For those questions with mathematical fractions, equations, tables, graphs and images, it is recommended that centres create the normal way of working for their students as they would for classroom materials.

\*For Eduqas past papers, A3 36 point bold can be reduced to A4 24 point bold.

### The mark scheme

Avoid changing the mark scheme. Consistency of approach is essential. Any errors made, omissions of questions or information needed to answer the question, may have implications at the appeals stage.

### Support from awarding organisations

The awarding organisations will continue to provide their usual support to centres with advice and guidance on how to modify the additional assessment material resources for use in classroom assessments.

Awarding organisations recognise that the additional assessment materials are being provided in a different way to past examination material and that these may present an issue for some teachers with visual impairments. In these cases, centres should contact the awarding organisations who will aim to provide extra support and guidance.

Where centres feel unable to modify the sets of questions, the awarding organisations will work with them to find an appropriate solution which in exceptional circumstances may include the production of modified versions, whether in a modified enlarged format or in Braille.

**Centres should ideally contact awarding organisations as soon as possible and no later than 30 April 2021.**

The awarding organisations will endeavour to produce the modified materials within ten working days of the request being received. This will be dependent on the complexity of the subject and the discussions between the centre and the awarding organisations.

The awarding organisations' contact details are:

- AQA
  - » E-mail: [ModifiedAssessments@aqa.org.uk](mailto:ModifiedAssessments@aqa.org.uk)
- Eduqas
  - » E-mail: [Modifiedpaperqueries@wjec.co.uk](mailto:Modifiedpaperqueries@wjec.co.uk)
- OCR
  - » E-mail: [modified.papers@ocr.org.uk](mailto:modified.papers@ocr.org.uk)
- Pearson
  - » E-mail: [additional\\_requirements@pearson.com](mailto:additional_requirements@pearson.com)

## Submission of grades

Awarding organisations will contact centres with further information in the coming weeks. The final date for entering grades will be on 18 June 2021.

Awarding organisations will provide details on how to input candidates' grades in the collection system.

### What to consider when submitting grades

The awarding organisations will ask for the following information:

- A grade for each candidate
- In the case of tiered GCSE subjects, schools and colleges should provide grades that reflect their tier of entry.

A teacher can include a 'U' (ungraded).

Awarding organisations will collect grade decisions for the endorsements in spoken language in GCSE English Language, speaking in GCSE Modern Foreign Languages and practicals in A-level Biology, Chemistry, Geology and Physics at the same time as teacher assessed grades. Awarding organisations will confirm their individual arrangements to centres.

As indicated in Ofqual's Conditions (GQAA3.5), subject grades are confidential and must not be given to students or parents/guardians. The endorsement grade can be released.

## Head of Centre declaration

A declaration by the Head of Centre is required to finalise the submission of grades. Further information on submission will be provided along with details of grade submission.

### Head of Centre Declaration

**A declaration should be completed by the Head of Centre for each awarding organisation on completion of their respective submissions**

I confirm that:

- these grades have been checked for accuracy, reviewed by a second member of staff and are accurate and represent the professional judgements made by my staff
- entries were appropriate for each candidate in that students entered were those already studying the course, and each candidate has no more than one entry per subject
- my centre has met the requirements set out by exam boards/JCQ for internal quality assurance
- I am satisfied that each student's grade is based on an appropriately broad range of evidence, including evidence from other centres, providers or specialist teachers if relevant, and is their own work
- each student has been taught (or, in the case of private candidates, has studied) an appropriate amount of content to form the basis for a grade
- awarding organisation requirements have been met for any private candidates
- access arrangements and reasonable adjustments were provided with appropriate input from the SENCo and other specialists (and where they were not, that has been taken into account)
- I and my staff have taken note of the Ofqual guidance on making objective judgements, judgements have not been influenced by pressure from students or parents/carers, and I am confident that the judgements are fair
- all relevant student evidence and records are available for inspection, as necessary

Head of Centre Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Centre Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Centre Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Guidance for exam centres accepting Private Candidates

Please note that the Interim guidance for centres accepting Private Candidate entries for GCSE, AS and A level qualification in summer 2021, JCQ 15 March 2021 is superseded by this document.

This guidance provides an overview of those elements of the assessment process that are particularly relevant for Private Candidates in Summer 2021. It applies to Private Candidates taking GCSEs, AS or A levels.

This guidance has been written with Private Candidates in mind, but may also apply to some other students, particularly those who have changed centres recently.

The Department for Education has published guidance for centres on a [Private Candidate Support Grant](#).

JCQ will produce a list of centres willing to offer GCSEs, AS or A levels to Private Candidates who wish to enter in Summer 2021. All JCQ centres have been given the opportunity to be added to the list. JCQ has contacted all centres by email with a survey asking them to provide details of the subjects they can offer and a brief outline of their assessment process for Private Candidates including, for example, whether they can offer assessments remotely and whether they are willing to consider pre-existing evidence.

### Private Candidates

Private Candidates are students who have not studied with the exam centre that makes their entry. Included in this group are, for example:

- school age students who have been home educated;
- adults who have studied independently;
- students who have studied with a distance learning provider which does not offer exam entry;
- students at a school or college who have studied an additional subject outside of the school or college; and
- students returning to their former centre to resit a qualification.

This guidance also applies to students at a school or college who have studied an additional subject outside of the school or college.

### Overview of assessment process

Private Candidates will be assessed this year on a range of evidence, in a similar way to other students. Centres will have considerable flexibility to determine the appropriate range of evidence for their students. We expect centres that assess Private Candidates to use this flexibility to select evidence which reflects the student's particular circumstances, including the content they have covered in their studies.

Centres accepting Private Candidate entries will need to understand how the Private Candidate has been studying, what evidence they may have already generated, and how much of the specification content they have covered in their studies. This could be achieved by means of a short interview with the student - which could be conducted remotely – or a short questionnaire. This will enable the centre to identify what types of assessment might be most appropriate for

the Private Candidate, whether pre-existing evidence is available and whether any reasonable adjustments or access arrangements are required. Centres should consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 when providing reasonable adjustments for Private Candidates. Where a centre agrees to provide reasonable adjustments for a candidate, no additional charge should be made.

Centres should ensure they have clearly communicated their assessment approach to a potential Private Candidate, before agreeing to make their entry, to help ensure the candidate and centre have the same expectations of the process.

Where a centre wishes to accept a Private Candidate entry for a subject it does not teach, it may wish to consider engaging third party subject expertise to conduct the assessment process. Where subject expertise is utilised, the centre is responsible for ensuring that the assessments have been conducted appropriately. Awarding organisations may be able to support centres in identifying appropriate subject experts.

### **Supervising assessments**

Where a centre wishes to supervise an assessment, but the student is unable to sit the assessment at the centre, remote supervision can be used. Centres do not need to have specialist remote invigilation software – the student could be observed remotely using standard video conferencing software (for example, Microsoft Teams or Zoom). Centres must ensure that however assessments are conducted, they are the student's own, unaided work.

### **Quality assurance and appeals**

Private Candidates' results should be included in a centre's internal quality assurance checks as far as possible, but they may need to be excluded from wider quality assurance exercises where, for example, their evidence base is different from the centre's other students. Private Candidates should also be excluded from any check using the centre's historical data. Evidence to support Private Candidates' grades may be reviewed during external quality assurance, but they will be treated separately in statistical analysis used to identify centres for checks. Private Candidates will not affect a centre's published results or historical performance. For this reason, it is important that centres indicate which students are Private Candidates when entering them for qualifications, unless the candidate is primarily an internal candidate taking one or more additional non-taught subject.

Appeals for Private Candidates will follow the same process as for other students. More information on appeals will be provided in due course.

## Types of evidence

### Pre-existing evidence

Some Private Candidates may have already generated a significant amount of evidence during their studies, including essays, assignments and mock exams – while others may have no pre-existing evidence. Before deciding whether to accept pre-existing evidence a centre will want to consider the conditions under which it was produced and the level of confidence they can have in its authenticity.

Where evidence has been set, supervised and/or marked by a third party, the centre should ask for the evidence to be submitted to it directly by that third party, along with a supporting statement confirming:

- the conditions under which the assessments were taken;
- whether any reasonable adjustments, access arrangements or special consideration were applied;
- that the third party is not aware of any potential conflicts of interest, for example that there is no personal or family relationship between the student and tutor; and
- that the third party will cooperate with the centre and the awarding organisation if needed, for example, during the appeals process.

The centre should make appropriate arrangements with the third party for the retention of evidence from the Private Candidate, in line with this guidance.

Pre-existing evidence must not be accepted if the centre has concerns about its authenticity, for example if the standard of work is much higher than in comparable assessments completed under centre supervision.

### Sources of evidence

The following guidance may be helpful:

Source of evidence	Examples	Guidance for centres
Evidence set, supervised and/or marked by a tutor or organisation with whom the centre has an established relationship.	This might apply, for example, where the student has studied with a distance learning provider which has established links with the exam centre accepting the entry - or where the centre has appointed a specialist tutor to work with the student.	<p>In this case the centre may accept the evidence and grading judgement of the third party, provided it has no grounds for concern about authenticity.</p> <p>Alternatively, the centre may accept the evidence and make its own grading decision, for example where other assessments are also being taken.</p> <p>The evidence and grade should still be subject to internal quality assurance checks to ensure, for example, that all of the necessary documentation has been completed.</p>

(Cont.)

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<p>Evidence set, supervised and/or marked by an educational organisation recognised by an appropriate independent authority, for example LEA, DfE, Ofsted, an awarding organisation.</p>	<p>This might apply, for example, where a student has completed some work with one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• distance learning provider</li><li>• another approved exam centre</li><li>• community language centre</li><li>• hospital or prison education service</li><li>• performing arts organisation</li><li>• pupil referral unit</li></ul>	<p>In this case the centre may accept the evidence and grading judgements of the third party provided it has no grounds for concern about authenticity.</p>
	<p>This may also apply to students who have moved schools or colleges during the course of study.</p>	<p>The centre will want to obtain assurances from the person responsible for the student's assessment that the approach taken meets the awarding organisation requirements.</p>
		<p>Alternatively, the centre may accept the evidence and make its own grading decision, for example where other assessments are also being taken.</p>
		<p>The evidence and grade should still be subject to internal quality assurance checks to ensure, for example, that all of the necessary documentation has been completed.</p>

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<p>Evidence set, supervised and/or marked by a private tutor with whom the centre has no established relationship.</p>	<p>This might apply, for example, where a student has completed some assessments with a private tutor, arranged independently by the student or their parents.</p>	<p>Exceptionally, in cases where the student does not have sufficient other pre-existing evidence, the centre may accept evidence generated with a private tutor but should always validate the student's performance by setting at least one other assessment under centre supervision.</p>
		<p>If there is a marked difference in performance, the student should be asked to complete further assessments in order to establish the student's performance standard.</p>
		<p>The final grading decision should be taken by the centre on the basis of the full range of available evidence.</p>
		<p>The evidence and grade should be subject to internal quality assurance checks.</p>
		<p>Evidence produced with a tutor should not be accepted where the centre has taught the student that subject.</p>

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<p>Evidence set, supervised and/or marked by the student's parent or produced independently by the student.</p>	<p>This might apply where a student has studied completely independently or with only parental support and supervision.</p> <p>This category does not include evidence that has been set and marked by another education provider, and produced under parental supervision at their request (e.g. the students remote learning during lockdown).</p>	<p>Evidence in this category should not be accepted due to the potential conflict of interest.</p> <p>In this case the centre should develop a range of evidence based on assessments drawn from awarding organisation materials, or centre devised materials.</p>
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Some centres may prefer not to accept pre-existing evidence and instead to set new assessments on which the grade will be based. Some centres may also offer the student a choice of approaches. This is at the discretion of the centre, provided that students are informed of this in advance so that they can make an informed choice when selecting a centre and can provide their view as to the composition of the evidence base that will be used to determine their grade.

### **Assessment materials provided by the awarding organisation**

Centres may want to base one or more assessments on the additional assessment materials provided by awarding organisations, or on available past exam papers. Further information on the additional assessment materials can be found in the section [Guidance on the use of additional assessment materials for 2021](#).

The centre should ensure the Private Candidate is assessed only on what they have studied, like other students. This should be informed by the initial conversation they had with the student, as well as any other pre-existing evidence provided.

### **Additional assessments**

In some cases, particularly where there is no suitable pre-existing evidence, centres might wish to set additional assessments in order to ensure that the range of evidence available to them is sufficient to enable them to determine an appropriate grade. This might also be useful in cases where a student's performance is considered borderline and additional evidence would help to support the centre's final grading decision.

In some situations, where other assessment methods are not suitable and the student is comfortable with this method of assessment, a verbal assessment might be useful to help confirm the final grade for the student. If this is used, the assessment should be recorded so that it can be referred to later during internal and external quality assurance and, where necessary, the centre review and appeals process. The focus of the assessment should be to assess the student's knowledge and skills as required by the specification.

**Examples to show how the different sources of evidence might be combined:**

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Pre-existing evidence	<p>This student has a substantial amount of pre-existing evidence produced with a private tutor.</p>	<p>This student has studied with a distance learning provider and has generated a range of appropriate evidence. The distance learning provider (DLP) has marked the work and determined an overall grade.</p> <p>The centre discusses the DLP's approach and receives assurances that it meets the awarding organisation's requirements, giving them confidence to submit the proposed grade.</p>	<p>None.</p>
Centre generated evidence	<p>The centre sets the student an additional assessment, drawn from AO materials, under remote supervision before determining their final grade.</p>	<p>Not required (see above).</p>	<p>This student has no pre-existing evidence so the centre sets an assessment based on awarding organisation assessment materials, taken under centre supervision.</p> <p>The centre also sets additional assessments of a different type on topics not covered by the first assessment to ensure they have a good basis for their grade.</p>

The JCQ awarding organisations greatly appreciate all of the hard work that centres will undertake in setting out and implementing their processes to determine grades. Centres are required to submit grades that have been determined in line with published guidance and their own Centre Policy.

The decision to not go ahead with exams in Summer 2021 means that the causes and drivers for malpractice will be different to those in a normal examination series. However, malpractice can still occur through genuine error or intent, particularly around the determination of grades. A minority of centre staff may fail to appropriately adhere to the guidance in determining grades and some students might attempt to gain an unfair advantage.

To support centres in these challenging times we have set out below some of the circumstances in which JCQ awarding organisations will investigate potential malpractice concerns. Please note that the list is not intended to be exhaustive and there may be other instances of potential malpractice which will require investigation.

### Centres/centre staff

The awarding organisations will investigate credible allegations of malpractice or issues reported from our monitoring processes that raise concerns about a failure to follow the published requirements for determining grades. Examples include:

- Exam entries are created for students who had not studied the course of entry or had not intended to enter for June 2021.
- Grades created for students who have not been taught sufficient content to provide the basis for that grade.
- A teacher deliberately and inappropriately disregarding the centre's published policy when determining grades.
- A teacher fabricating evidence of candidate performance to support an inflated grade.
- A teacher deliberately providing inappropriate levels of support before or during an assessment, including deliberate disclosure of mark schemes and assessment materials, to support an inflated grade.
- A teacher intentionally submitting inflated grades.
- A failure to retain evidence used in the determination of grades in accordance with the JCQ Grading guidance.
- A systemic failure to follow the centre's policy in relation to the application of Access Arrangements or Special Consideration arrangements for students in relation to assessments used to determine grades.
- A failure to take reasonable steps to authenticate student work.
- A failure to appropriately manage Conflicts of Interest (COIs) within a centre.
- A Head of Centre's failure to submit the required declaration when submitting their grades.
- Grades being released to students (or their parents/carers) before the issue of results (variations to this requirement exist in Wales<sup>3</sup>).

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<sup>3</sup> For WJEC qualifications, centres are required to release provisional CDGs to candidates prior to submission to WJEC - please see WJEC's *High Level guidance on the centre review and WJEC appeals process Summer 2021* document see [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)

- Failure to cooperate with an awarding body's quality assurance, appeal or investigation processes.
- Failure to conduct a centre review or submit an appeal when requested to do so by a student.

Centres which identify such incidents should report them to the appropriate awarding organisation as normal, using the [JCQ M2 form](#).

## Students

It is possible that some students may attempt to influence their teachers' judgements about their grades.

Students might attempt to gain an unfair advantage during the centre's process by, for example, submitting fabricated evidence or plagiarised work. Such incidents would constitute malpractice and centres are asked to report these to the appropriate awarding organisation in the normal way using the [JCQ M1 form](#).

Students, or individuals acting on behalf of a student, such as parents/carers, might also try to influence grade decisions by applying pressure to centres or their staff. The awarding organisations anticipate that the majority of such instances will be dealt with by the centre internally – in such cases, we ask that the centres retain clear and reliable records of the circumstances and the steps taken, and that students are made aware of the outcome. However, if a student continues to inappropriately attempt to pressure centre staff then please inform the relevant awarding organisation using the [JCQ M1 form](#).<sup>4</sup> The awarding organisations will contact your centre if we receive credible allegations that such pressure has been applied in order that appropriate steps can be taken.

In all the scenarios listed above, as well as any others that have not been explicitly identified here, the JCQ Suspected malpractice policies and procedures 2020-2026 continues to apply. Please be aware that, as always, all investigations into alleged malpractice remain confidential and the findings, including any sanctions imposed, are not publicly disclosed.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding malpractice, please contact the appropriate awarding organisation via the contact information detailed at the end of the [JCQ Suspected malpractice policies and procedures 2020-2021](#).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Malpractice\\_20-21\\_v2-1.pdf](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Malpractice_20-21_v2-1.pdf)

## Results

The dates for the publication of results are being brought forward this Summer. This will see GCE AS, A-level and GCSE results being published in the same week.

### GCE AS and A-level qualifications

- AS and A-level results will be released to centres on **Monday 9 August 2021**.
- AS and A-level students will receive their results on **Tuesday 10 August 2021**.

### GCSE qualifications

- GCSE results will be released to centres on **Wednesday 11 August 2021**.
- GCSE students will receive their results on **Thursday 12 August 2021**.

The JCQ document<sup>6</sup> [Notice to Centres - release of general qualification results, June 2021 examinations](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Release-of-results-June-2021.pdf) provides detailed information for heads of centres, senior leaders and examination officers.

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6 <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Release-of-results-June-2021.pdf>

### Centre reviews and appeals to awarding organisation

The arrangements for awarding grades to students in summer 2021 include internal and external quality assurance measures which aim to ensure that on results day students are issued with fair and consistent grades that have been objectively reached. Sharing information with students about the evidence being used as part of a centre's grade determination process is important and should help to avoid issues that may otherwise arise when results are issued.

Post results, the need for appeals should be limited as students should be confident in their grades because of the following:

- An effective Centre Policy which is adhered to by all centre staff involved in the determination of teacher assessed grades, and which has been reviewed by awarding organisations.
- A high standard of internal quality assurance both in determining teacher assessed grades based only on student evidence and ensuring that there are no administrative or procedural errors.
- Effective provision of access arrangements for all eligible students.
- Effective arrangements for students that may have been disadvantaged during an assessment that contributes to their grade either by taking the circumstances into account in determining grades or by using alternative evidence that was unaffected by the adverse circumstances.
- Effective communication with students and parents/guardians so that they understand the centre's approach to determining their grades before grades are submitted to the awarding organisations, including the evidence used and a realistic understanding of the standard at which they are performing. Centres should make students aware of the sources of evidence that will be used to determine their grade in advance of that grade being submitted to awarding organisations. This transparency should enable students to raise any errors or circumstances relating to particular pieces of evidence to be taken into account in advance of the grade submission and should reduce the number of instances in which students need to appeal.
- Accurate recording and effective checking of information on the assessment record for the student to avoid errors in submitting teacher assessed grades.
- Effective oversight and clear professional accountability from the Head of Centre who will complete the Head of Centre Declaration.

### **The appeals process relies on excellent record-keeping through the assessment process:**

- With this in mind teachers / heads of department are required to: document the sources of evidence used for determining grades for the class/cohort along with a rationale for what was selected.
- Document any exceptional circumstances for students, i.e. if a student's evidence is different from the subject cohort and the rationale for that; if approved access arrangements/reasonable adjustments were in place and if not how they were taken account of when determining the grade; and how any mitigating circumstances such as illness were taken into account when determining the grade. We recommend centres document discussions with students about the range of evidence used.
- Maintain records as documented in their Centre Policy.
- Ensure that any evidence that is to be used to determine students' grades (e.g. student work and marks where work is not available) is stored safely and can be retrieved promptly by centre staff, if needed for a centre review or requested for awarding organisation appeal.

### **Students will need certain information to help them decide whether to appeal**

If centres haven't shared the following information before results day, they will need to be prepared to do so on results day if students request it:

- The Centre Policy
- The sources of evidence used to determine their grade along with any grades/marks associated with them
- Details of any special circumstances that have been taken into account in determining their grade, e.g. access arrangements, mitigating circumstances such as illness

As previously described in this document, awarding organisations will be providing assessment materials, guidance and training to support centres in making fair and consistent judgements which are without bias and will be conducting external quality assurance, including:

- reviewing Centre Policies; and
- sampling student work that has contributed to the range of evidence used in determining a grade.

Although every effort will be made to ensure that students are issued with the correct grades on results day, there will also be an appeals system as a safety net to resolve any errors not identified during the earlier parts of the process. Students who consider that an error has been made in determining their grade will have a right to appeal. We expect that there will be relatively few errors this year.

# Appeals Process

## After results day

Results issued (10/12 August)

1. **Student** asks centre for review because they think there has been an error

*Note: Grades can go up, down or stay the same*

**Centre review:** Centre checks for errors and process issues. Centre wants to change grade?

No

Yes

Centre informs student of outcome

**Awarding Organisation** checks and issues final grade; may require input from Centre

2. If **Student** thinks the error has not been resolved they ask centre for Awarding Organisation appeal

*Note: Grades can go up, down or stay the same*

Centre submits Awarding Organisation appeal

**Awarding Organisation appeal:**  
Have processes been followed, is the grade a reasonable exercise of academic judgement?

No

Yes

**Awarding Organisation** issues final grade; may require input from Centre

**Awarding Organisation** issues final grade

Centre informs student of outcome

3. If dissatisfied, applications may be made to Ofqual's EPRS (Exam Procedures Review Service)

It is important that the evidence (students' work) upon which grades were determined and records are available to enable the centre review to be conducted promptly after results are issued. Centres must take note of the JCQ guidance on the [Retention of candidates' work for the summer 2021 series](#).<sup>7</sup>

There are two stages to the summer 2021 appeals process:

### **Stage 1: centre review**

The first stage of the process is referred to as a **centre review**. If a student does not consider that they have been issued with the correct grade, they can ask their centre to check if an administrative or procedural error has occurred. The centre will need to ensure the student is aware that their grade could go down, up or stay the same. If the centre finds that an error has occurred, they will be able to submit a request to the awarding organisation to correct the error and amend the grade without the need to make an appeal to the awarding organisation.

### **Stage 2: appeal to the awarding organisation**

The second stage of the process is referred to as an appeal to the awarding organisation (submitted by the centre on the student's behalf). An appeal should be submitted if the student considers that the centre did not follow its procedure properly, the awarding organisation has made an administrative error, or the student considers that the grade awarded was an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement. The centre will need to ensure the student is aware that their grade could go down, up or stay the same.

### **Ofqual Exam Procedures Review Service**

If the student or centre considers that the awarding organisation has made a procedural error, they can apply to Ofqual's Exam Procedures Review Services (EPRS) to review the process undertaken by the awarding organisation.

### **Grounds for appeal**

In summary there are four grounds upon which a centre review or an appeal to an awarding organisation may be requested:

- At stage 1: The centre made an administrative error, e.g. an incorrect grade was submitted; an incorrect assessment mark was used when determining the grade.
- At stages 1 and 2: The centre did not apply a procedure correctly, such as the centre did not follow its Centre Policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or mitigating circumstances such as illness.
- At stage 2: The awarding organisation made an administrative error, e.g. the grade was incorrectly changed by the awarding organisation during the processing of grades.
- At stage 2: The student considers that the centre made an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement<sup>8</sup> in the choice of evidence from which to determine the grade and/or the determination of the grade from that evidence.

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7 <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Retention-of-evidence.pdf>

8 A reasonable judgement is one that is supported by evidence. An exercise of judgement will not be unreasonable simply because a student considers that an alternative grade should have been awarded, even if the student puts forward supporting evidence. There may be a difference of opinion without there being an unreasonable exercise of judgement. The reviewer will not remark individual assessments to make fine judgements but will take a holistic approach based on the overall evidence.

A student will first need to be informed of the outcome of the centre review. If they wish to appeal to the awarding organisation, they must then submit a request to their centre to proceed. The appeal must be submitted according to the requirements of the awarding organisation to which it is being submitted.

Clear communication with students and parents/carers about the appeals process should clarify the need for student consent. Students should be made aware that awarding organisations will determine the grade at appeal, that the grade could go down, up or stay the same and that the outcome will be final other than in instances of a process error by the awarding organisation (see Ofqual's EPRS process above).

The student must provide their written and recorded consent. Their grade could go down, up or remain the same at any stage in the centre review and/or appeals process.

**The centre must conduct a centre view and must also submit an appeal to the awarding organisation if requested to do so by a student.** The appeal to the awarding organisation can only be submitted if the first stage, centre review, has been completed and the outcome of the first stage issued to the student.

Please note that where an appeal raises significant concerns about a centre's implementation of its policy, or where appeals do not appear to have been submitted as requested by students the centre may be referred to the awarding body's malpractice investigation team for potential review and further action. It will be possible to ask awarding organisations to prioritise some appeals, e.g. those that are needed for a place at Higher Education. The timelines for priority and non-priority appeals are outlined on page 9.

The JCQ publication *A guide to the awarding bodies' appeals processes, June 2021 examination series*, will provide guidance on conducting the centre review, the awarding organisation's appeals process and escalation to the final regulatory EPRS process. This will be published early in the summer term.

## Additional templates and support materials

A range of materials and templates are also being made available to assist centres and will be downloadable from the JCQ website at: [Summer 2021 arrangements - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

These documents are:

- **Centre Policy for awarding teacher assessed grades:** whilst using this template is not compulsory, it is highly recommended as otherwise centres will need to prepare their own complete Centre Policy, which is a requirement.
- **Proformas and templates to assist centres:** a number of documents are being made available as a template in .docx format. These include:
  - » Centre Policy Summary Form (required)
  - » Head of Department Checklist (optional, recommended template)
  - » Assessment Record (optional, recommended template)
- **Worked examples to assist teachers in making grading decisions:** these provide a number of scenarios to assist teachers to arrive at a fair grade.
- **Grade Descriptors for AS / A Level and GCSE<sup>9</sup>**

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<sup>9</sup> If you offer vocational and technical qualifications at your centre, you are expected to undertake a similar process for those qualifications. Similar guidance will be issued to support you with meeting those requirements



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