

A guide to grading and awarding in Summer 2021 - GCSE and GCE, Project Qualifications and Advanced Extension Award in maths

Following the completion of DfE and Ofqual consultations, guidance has now been confirmed in relation to grading and awarding for GCSE, AS/A levels, Project Qualifications and Advanced Extension Award in maths in 2021. This article considers the actions which centres must take to comply with these requirements.

Overview

GCSE, AS and A levels, Project Qualifications and Advanced Extension Award in maths will be determined by teacher assessed grades (TAGs). To support teachers in making their judgement, awarding bodies will be providing a package of support materials to include questions, mark schemes, data about how students typically performed in individual questions and exemplar materials, as well as advice for teachers about content coverage, topic selection, marking and making grading judgements. This will be based on past questions and will include a proportion of previously unpublished questions for every subject. Use of these exam board support materials is not compulsory; they will be part of the range of evidence teachers could use to determine the grade.

TAGs must be submitted by 18 June (see individual awarding bodies for more information). Centres are required to produce a Centre Policy for determining teacher assessed grades, outlining their internal quality assurance approach, and submit with the Centre Policy Summary Form to JCQ no later than 30 April.

There will be a two-stage appeals process. First, a student will be able to ask their centre to review if there has been an administrative or procedural error. If following the review the student believes there is still a centre or awarding body error or considers that the grade awarded was an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement, the student will be able to appeal to the awarding body, via the centre.

Results days have been brought forward to allow for robust judgements to be made, external quality assurance processes to be in place, and to accommodate the post-results processes before higher and further education admission decisions are made.

AS and A level results will be released to students on 10 August. GCSE results will be released on 12 August.

Process

Firstly, it may be helpful to highlight the 10 areas which underpin the summer 2021 awarding process:

- Devising a Centre Policy
- Completing and submitting the Centre Policy Summary Form and Centre Policy (by 30 April)

- Gathering assessment evidence
- Making assessment decisions
- Making grading decisions
- Confirming the internal quality assurance
- Submission of grades and Head of Centre declaration(s)
- Understanding of the external quality assurance
- Being prepared for Results Day(s)
- Being aware of the Appeals process

To support heads of centres and SLT, JCQ have produced [Centre Guidance on the Determination of Grades](#) which provides information on 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. JCQ require centres to complete and submit a [Centre Policy Summary Form](#) and a [Centre Policy](#) by 30 April.

The Centre Policy Summary form must be completed by the head of centre as a statement of compliance to confirm that a centre policy is in place for the delivery of Teacher Assessed Grades for General Qualifications in 2021. This is an online webform which must be completed on the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) summarising Centre Policy.

The Centre Policy should be uploaded when the Centre Policy Summary form is completed. Both documents only need to be completed once for all awarding organisations unless information is missing or needs to be clarified. The purpose of the Centre Policy is to set out the process a centre will follow for determining grades, in an appropriate, consistent and fair way – only one Centre Policy needs to be submitted for all awarding organisations. Whilst using the JCQ Centre Policy template is not compulsory, it is highly recommended. Alternatively, centres will need to prepare their own complete Centre Policy.

Grading

Centres must be aware of, and apply, the following principles when making grading decisions:

- Centres are required to explain their ‘assessment plan’ to students, informing them of the evidence which has been/will be used to determine their grade. This will allow issues such as special consideration, in the event of an absence or illness, access arrangements and reasonable adjustments to be identified and resolved
- The discussion concerning the assessment items which are part of the ‘assessment plan’ is a teacher-led discussion
- Students/parents or carers should not be determining or negotiating which assessment items are included for consideration. However, there may be some flexibility if exceptional circumstances exist but, again, decisions will be made by teachers and not be led by students/parents or carers

- Inappropriate pressure from students/parents or carers should be recorded by the head of centre and reported to the relevant awarding body. Awarding bodies may treat such cases as malpractice
- Centres must not divulge the grades being submitted to the awarding bodies

Informing students/parents

Centres should utilise/share the document published by JCQ which provides an overview of the most important information that [students and parents or guardians](#) need to know about how grades will be awarded this summer. This includes a timeline of what is happening and when; how teachers, schools and colleges will determine grades; and when results will be received.

Documentation

To support centres through the grading process, Ofqual and JCQ have published the following documentation:

- [Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021](#)

This Ofqual document provides information for heads of centre, heads of department, subject leads and teachers about how to generate grades in 2021 and the evidence that should be considered.

- [Guidance for centres on making judgements that will support awarding in 2021](#)

Ofqual's [Information for centres about making objective judgements](#) is for teachers who are involved in making judgements that will support qualification awarding in 2021. It is designed to help teachers make those judgements as objectively as possible, to promote fairness and minimise bias.

This document applies in cases where teacher judgements determine the final grade for a particular qualification. It also applies in cases where teacher judgements contribute to the final grade. It applies equally to judgements relating to students based at centres and those who are either home-educated or are private candidates.

- [Grade descriptors – GCSE, AS & A level](#)

JCQ has produced grade descriptors to underpin a centre's holistic grading judgements. Each awarding organisation has created grading exemplification for each specification. These materials will be made available by each awarding organisation by 19th April.

Evidence

Teacher judgements should be based upon a range of evidence from over the course of study. Summer 2020 awarding required teachers to judge what a student would have achieved in their final examination, however this year, teachers are required to judge the standard at which each student is performing in a subject on the content which they have been taught.

Teaching and learning should take place for as long as possible, and therefore, judgements should also be made as late as possible, taking into account that the final submission date for TAGs is 18 June.

Marks, tests and work already undertaken can be used as evidence. It is possible for a mark from an assessment where there is no evidence to be considered, however, this would not be acceptable if applicable to all evidence. For assessments taken and utilised from this point forward, all evidence should be retained. For previously taken assessments where this evidence is not available, centres are required to provide details of the assessment, including whether this was a paper from a previous exam series or centre defined paper, information relating to grade boundaries and the marks awarded even though centres may not have copies of candidates' scripts.

If assessment in a subject includes non-examination assessments (NEAs), these should continue and used as evidence. Incomplete NEAs can be utilised.

To reduce the number of appeals, centres must inform students of the evidence which has been used to determine their grade – but the grade must not be disclosed.

Documentation

To support centres in collating and recording the evidence used, JCQ has published the following support materials:

- [Assessment record template](#) - This is an optional (though recommended) template. Every centre must produce an Assessment Record for each subject cohort, that includes the sources of the assessment evidence being used and the rationale for the choice of evidence, the level of control for assessments considered, and any other evidence that explains the determination of the final teacher assessed grades. Any necessary variations for individual students must also be recorded.

It is anticipated that centres may choose to adopt this template in full or make amendments – adding or deleting material – to reflect centre practices. This template is provided for information and does not constitute legal advice.

- [Head of Department Checklist template](#) - A Head of Department checklist/declaration should be completed for each subject before submitting the grades for internal standardisation.

Quality Assurance

The minimum requirements for internal quality assurance include:

- The inclusion of information relating to standardisation of marking and grading judgements
- The signing off of each grade for a subject by at least two teachers in that subject, one of whom should be the head of department/subject lead

- Where there is only one teacher in a subject/department, the head of centre should be the second signatory
- The head of centre to submit a declaration when grades are submitted confirming that:
 - grades were checked for accuracy, reviewed by a second member of staff and are accurate and represent the professional judgements made by 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
 - their centre has met the requirements set out by exam boards/JCQ for internal quality assurance
 - they are 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 provide the basis for a grade
 - if applicable, exam board 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)
 - they and their staff have taken note of the Ofqual guidance on making objective judgements, judgements have not been influenced by pressure from students, parents or carers, and that they are confident that the judgements are fair
 - all relevant student evidence and records are available for inspection, as necessary

Awarding organisations are working collectively to support centres on their quality assurance. The awarding organisation supporting your quality assurance has been determined by your centre number.

External quality assurance – awarding bodies

This will be a three-stage process:

- Centre policy review – will take place following submission by centres
- Virtual centre visits – where the Centre Policy suggests that further support and guidance may be required will take place in May and June
- Post-submission sampling - to confirm that centres have implemented what was in their submitted policies and that their submitted grades reflect this will take place following the submission of grades by centres

Appeals

There is a two-stage appeals process:

- A centre review – a student can ask for a check for an administrative or procedural error. If such an error is identified, the centre will submit a revised grade and a rationale for the awarding body to consider

- Awarding body appeal – if no administrative or procedural error is identified, and the student believes that their centre’s judgement was wrong, they can request that their centre submits an appeal on their behalf to the awarding body. The centre will forward the evidence used, rationale/process for determining the grade and the student’s concern(s). Students can appeal to an awarding body (through their centre) to consider whether the selection of evidence was an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement. Students should be informed that their grade could go down as well as up

Key documents

Ofqual

- [Frameworks for awarding qualifications in 2021: consultation outcomes](#)
- [Decisions and analysis following the consultation on the general qualifications alternative awarding framework](#)
- [Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021](#)
- [Guidance for centres on making judgements that will support awarding in 2021](#)
- [General Qualifications Alternative Awarding Framework](#)
- [Regulatory arrangements for the awarding of vocational and technical and other general qualifications in 2020-2021](#)
- [Vocational and technical qualifications contingency regulatory framework, COVID-19 Conditions and Requirements](#) and [Vocational and technical qualifications contingency regulatory framework, COVID-19 Guidance](#)
- [Extraordinary regulatory framework: VTQ, Covid-19 Conditions and Requirements](#)
- [Awarding organisation coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information pages](#)
- [Consultation on autumn assessment opportunities for VTQs](#)
- [Qualifications Explainer Tool](#)

JCO

- [Guidance](#)
 - [JCO Centre Guidance on the Determination of Grades](#)
 - [Centre Policy Summary Form](#)
 - [Student, parent and guardian guidance](#)
- [Templates \(optional documents\)](#)
 - [Centre Policy template](#)
 - [Assessment record template](#)
 - [Head of Department Checklist template](#)
- [Grading supporting documentation](#)
 - [A/AS Level grade descriptors](#)
 - [GCSE grade descriptors](#)
 - [Worked examples](#)
- [Further support materials](#)
 - [Private Candidate FAQs](#)