



Update on centre assessment grades and rank orders for private candidates and for students who have worked with other centres

Thursday 30 April 2020¹

Background

When we published our [Information for Heads of Centre](#) on 3 April, we said that we were exploring alternatives for private candidates. These include students who schools and colleges have not taught themselves, because they have been home-educated, have followed distance-learning programmes or have studied independently. We have also been receiving questions from centres whose students have only recently joined them or who, because of their particular circumstances, have studied for their qualifications with other centres too.

This update will help private candidates and centres to understand more about their options.

Heads of centre can provide centre assessment grades for private candidates and include them in their centre's rank order

As we said in the information published on 3 April, if the Head of Centre where a private candidate was registered to take their exams is confident they, or their staff, have seen sufficient evidence of the student's work to form a judgement they can submit a centre assessment grade for the student, and include them in the centre's rank order.

¹ This information will be included in our [Information to Heads of Centre](#) when we update the document after our consultation closes.

Communicating with private candidates

The Head of Centre should tell any private candidates who had registered to take exams at the centre whether they will provide for them a centre assessment grade and include them in their centre's rank order. The Head of Centre should seek advice from the exam board where cases are not straightforward.

Exam board guidance for centres

Exam boards have set out further guidance for centres where the Head of Centre is willing to provide a centre assessment grade for a private candidate but wishes to consider additional sources of evidence before doing so. The guidance explains how the centre should do this. This includes the process centres would need to follow to make judgements about the student's evidence of attainment, so that a centre assessment grade, and rank order position, can be submitted to the exam board.

Private candidates working with a new centre

The exam boards' guidance provides for a private candidate to transfer to another centre so that the new centre may work with the candidate to determine for them a centre assessment grade and include them in their rank order.

Exam boards will decide whether to approve a centre to work with students that they have not previously taught. This will support the exam board to manage any potential risks of such an arrangement. Where a private candidate arranges to work with a new centre that had been approved by the exam board to do so, the student will need to provide the new centre with evidence of their work towards the qualification. The centre would then validate that evidence, for example with some on-line meetings between the student and subject tutors. The centre might also require the student to complete additional work under supervised conditions.

While this approach will provide an additional opportunity for some private candidates to receive grades this summer, we recognise this could be an onerous process that might not be suitable for all. The centre will also likely charge a fee to work with the student in this way.

We explained in [our consultation](#) that we consider it will not be possible for calculated grades to be issued to private candidates where a centre cannot submit for them a centre assessment grade and rank order information. Although we wish to see as many students as possible progress to further study or employment, it is vital all grades are determined using a robust and consistent process so that everyone can have confidence in them. We will consider the responses to our consultation, and any alternative proposals that have been put forward before deciding whether any further options are possible.

Heads of centre must be as confident in the centre assessment grades and rank order for private candidates as they are for their other students

In our consultation, we have said that exam boards will be able to issue calculated grades to any student included in a centre's cohort. Reflecting the expectations set out in our consultation about how we ensure the grading process is as fair as it can be this summer, Heads of Centre must have the same level of confidence in the grade and rank order position they submit for private candidates as they do for their other students. We will reflect this specific expectation in an update to our Information for Heads of Centre document when we republish it after our consultation concludes.

Evidence from specialist teachers

The exam boards' guidance also reflects our existing expectation that a centre can seek further information from teachers and other education professionals who have been supporting a student's learning to allow them to make secure judgements about centre assessment grades and a student's position in the rank order. This might include, for example, seeking information from teachers in another school, college, or hospital setting, or from qualified teachers of deaf or visually impaired learners. While discussions with teachers and other professionals should take place where needed before the centre assessment grade and rank order information are decided by the centre, those final judgements should be kept confidential within the centre.

Transferring a student's entry to another centre with which the student has previously studied

Where a student has studied previously with a centre but has not entered for examinations with that centre, it may be more appropriate for the previous recognised exam centre to submit to the exam board the centre assessment grade and rank order information. This will be in cases where another centre holds more evidence of the student's likely achievement had the exams gone ahead, and so is better placed to take responsibility for submitting a centre assessment grade and rank order for the student. The exam boards will allow the entry to be transferred from one centre to another in these cases where both centres agree the approach.

Further information

Students who have not already been in touch with the centre with which they were planning to take their exams should contact the centre to ask when a decision on whether the centre will provide a centre assessment grade for them will be made.

Private candidates interested in working with a new centre should contact their exam board for information on centres approved to do so.

- **AQA** phone: 0800 197 7162 email: eos@aqa.org.uk
- **OCR** phone: 01223 553998 email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk
- **Pearson** phone: 0345 618 0440
email: support.pearson.com/uk/s/qualificationcontactus
- **WJEC** Eduqas phone: 029 2026 5000 email: info@wjec.co.uk

Given the particular challenges facing private candidates this summer, we have also asked organisations representing higher and further education to consider the steps that providers could take when making admissions decisions this summer for any private candidates who do not receive a grade. They have told us that they believe that institutions will consider a range of other evidence and information for these students to allow them to progress wherever possible.

An additional exam series in the autumn

We are currently considering arrangements for an additional exam series in the autumn, in accordance with government policy. This will be open to students who had entered to take exams this summer, including those who were unable to receive a calculated grade.