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Education, universities and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

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Private candidate support grant Published 15 March 2021

Introduction

Introduction Private candidate support On 4 January 2021, the Prime Minister announced that, in the government's view,

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general qualifications in 2021. The Department for Education has confirmed that there will be a clear and accessible

route for private candidates to work with an approved exam centre to receive a grade this year, at the same time as other candidates, and without significantly increased cost compared to a normal year. We are working with the sector to ensure there are sufficient centres accepting private candidates. Exam boards have also announced that private candidates will not incur late fees until 26 April for GCSE, AS level and A levels.

exams for general qualifications (GCSE, AS and A level) and some vocational technical

qualifications (VTQs) could not go ahead as planned in summer 2021. We conducted a

joint consultation with Ofqual about alternative arrangements for GCSE, AS and A level,

and alternative arrangements for vocational technical qualifications (VTQs) and other

Private candidate support grant A grant will be available to support approved exam centres to meet costs associated

exam centres to offer to support private candidates to access a grade in this exceptional year. The grant will be £200 per entry for GCSE, AS, A level, and for VTQs and other general

with the additional demands of assessment for private candidates this year. This is to

avoid those extra costs being passed on to candidates. The department encourages all

• how private candidates should contact them to register

with private candidates remotely

List of centres The department will support candidates who have not yet registered to find a centre. For GCSE, AS and A level, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) will publish a list of centres that plan to claim the grant and have capacity to accept further private

candidates. Centres will receive information from JCQ in the week beginning 15 March

about how to be included on the list. Once the list is published at the end of March, private candidates will be able to use the list to find an exam centre. Centres will be asked to provide details of: • the subjects and specifications they cover

• the main points of their assessment approach, particularly whether they can work

a centre may only take a small number of private candidates who have an existing relationship with the centre or may not have capacity to accept more candidates at this stage. However, the department will encourage all GCSE, AS and A level private candidates to use the list to find a centre if they do not already have one. Any centres with capacity to accept candidates are strongly encouraged to register for the list.

For VTQs and other general qualifications, a list will not be published but candidates will be advised to contact their awarding organisation if they are unsure of their nearest

qualifications.

Eligibility Candidates

Students who are enrolled in a school or college (state-funded or otherwise), but taking an additional subject that they have studied entirely without support from that school or college, can be included in centres' grant claims for that additional subject only.

Centres cannot claim for a candidate resitting a qualification if they are resitting at the

previous entry, or if their resit is already funded by an educational provider. However,

the centre can claim the grant if the candidate originally sat the subject as a private

candidate, or if the candidate can no longer return to the original centre to resit the

Centres cannot claim funding for candidates resitting GCSE English Language or Maths

Students who are enrolled with an approved centre, for example a distance learning

candidate entry with a different centre for the purpose of sitting the exam, can be

exam fees are not already included in a broader fee for tuition or a course of study.

Candidates should be in England and registered with an England-based centre, or

if the exams had gone ahead. There is no candidate age restriction for this grant.

provider, for the purposes of tuition only, and who would ordinarily have made a private

included in a claim for funding by the centre that ultimately enters them, provided that

otherwise have a reasonable expectation that they would have taken exams in England

centre where they originally took that qualification and that centre funded their

• individuals otherwise not affiliated with a school, college, or similar provider

students paying for an independent school • students on a college course, part-time course, or distance learning course where

Examples of private candidates include:

• independent adult learners

qualification.

as a condition of funding.

individuals who are electively home educated

individuals who are alternatively educated

- exams.

education on the same basis as GCSE, AS and A level, and would normally have assessments or exams in the summer term • functional skills qualifications which would normally have had an exam between March and June 2021 inclusive and need to be assessed under alternative arrangements

Awarding organisations will set out on their websites how each of their qualifications

will be awarded under the alternative arrangements announced on 25 February.

particular subjects and take appropriate action where possible.

Fees for private candidates

candidate should, at a minimum, pay the exam board entry fee.

Qualifications The qualifications eligible for the grant are:

centre fee. This maximum is:

£350 per subject at A level

paid so far if the candidate changes centre.

fees.

Ofqual.

In a normal year, most private candidates pay the entry fee for their qualification, and an additional charge for the centre to administer that entry. This will remain the same for summer 2021. The available grant of £200 per entry is intended to cover the additional costs an exam centre would incur this year because the assessment approach is different.

• £250 at AS level • £200 at GCSE For VTQs and other general qualifications, the fee differs by qualification. Centres will not be able to claim the grant if the cost charged to the candidate is higher than the candidate would have been charged in the 2018 to 2019 academic year, before the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

the subsidy. However, optional fees or fees that could be avoided by reasonable action on the part of the candidate do not need to be included, for example tutoring beyond that required to produce evidence for a grade or late entry fees. The department expects exams centres to be reasonable and transparent with their

Exam boards have confirmed there will be no late fees for entries until 26 April 2021 for

within the criteria of the grant. Additionally, centres should not pass on additional charges to private candidates where they expect to receive a grant from the department which has not been paid or if payment has been delayed for any reason. Centre requirements For GCSE, AS and A Levels, eligible exam centres must:

• have been approved by one or more exam boards to assess the qualifications in scope

requirements of that board - this includes being able to deliver the quality assurance

• be registered with each board they wish to make entries for and meet all relevant

have been assigned a JCQ National Centre Number (NCN)

Provision for candidates

• sit awarding body provided assessment materials

present existing evidence

provide evidence remotely

create new evidence with the centre

the appeals process, if required. In some cases, exam centres may wish to work with a tutor or with other educational providers to assess a candidate. Only the exam centre which enters the private candidate can apply for the grant. If another educational provider is working with the exam centre, it is for the centre and the provider to determine any financial agreements.

claims service, opening in autumn 2021, with the timing of payments to be confirmed.

Any claim will require the exam centre to already have or be prepared to create a

registration of bank details on the department's supplier registration system. The

online claims process will require each centre to provide claim details, which will

include several declarations to ensure the eligibility criteria are met. Some further

department will reserve the right to seek reimbursement of grant payments. This may

• their UKPRN if they have one - if a centre does not have one, they should register for a

a candidate number, awarding organisation and qualification title and code for each

declaration. This includes entering for 2 different specifications. Centres must also

make reasonable efforts to ensure that if the private candidate has an existing centre

relationship where they could be entered at no cost to themselves, they have made a

extend to situations where exam boards cannot ratify the quality of assessment and

supporting evidence will also be required. Where claims are made in error, the

Details of how claims can be made will be published in the summer.

• a National Centre Number (or centre agreement as applicable)

Further information

reasonable effort to be registered there instead.

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qualifications which are subject to alternative arrangements to exams. An entry means one private candidate for one qualification in one subject. This is open to any exam centre, provided the centre meets the eligibility criteria.

 what forms of assessment they plan to use A centre does not need to be on the JCQ-produced list to claim the grant. For example, Private candidates are encouraged to register with a centre before 26 April to avoid late

entry fees and to allow enough time for assessment. This does not affect existing

grant for existing private candidates if they meet the relevant criteria.

private candidate entries, who do not need to re-register. Exam centres may claim the

centre. Centres that are already approved by an awarding organisation should liaise

They may alternatively be contacted by the awarding organisation to see if they can

accommodate private candidates. Entry deadlines may also be different for these

with the awarding organisation directly to tell them if they can take private candidates.

Exam centres can claim this grant for private candidates in England only. A private candidate is defined by Ofqual as a learner in relation to whom there is no relevant centre. A relevant centre, in relation to a learner, is a centre which has:

• materially contributed to the preparation of the learner for the assessment (whether

through teaching or instruction provided by teachers employed by it or otherwise)

It is the responsibility of centres to satisfy themselves that candidates meet the criteria.

purchased the general qualification or VTQ on behalf of the learner

Centres should not claim for the grant if exam fees are already included in a broader fee for tuition or a course of study, for example:

- the exam fees are included in the course cost Funding is only available where an individual would normally pay a specific cost just for
- GCSEs, AS levels and A levels, in all subjects • all vocational and technical qualifications and other general qualifications that are regulated by Ofqual and are used to progress to further education and higher

The grant is available only for teacher assessed grades produced in summer 2021, not to any other assessment period, due to the unique circumstances this year. Candidates may enter for multiple subjects, though candidates should only enter for subjects they were already planning to enter this summer. The department will work with JCQ to review the list of centres for GCSE, AS and A level to identify gaps in coverage for

International GCSEs and A levels are not eligible because these are not regulated by

The department, in offering the grant, would expect exam centres to consider minimising or removing the impact of passing on any other charges to private candidates. Exam centres are expected to only charge private candidates the same fee they would charge in previous years where exams have taken place. The private

Exam centres will not be eligible to claim the grant if the candidate has been required to

contribute more than a maximum fee, including both exam board entry fee and the

If a private candidate was already registered with the centre before this grant was announced, the centre may still be able to claim the grant for this candidate, if they meet the other criteria. The centre should check that they meet the criteria, and reimburse fees if necessary, if they wish to claim the grant for this candidate. If this is not possible, the candidate can choose to maintain the previous agreement, or transfer

to another centre. It is at the existing centre's discretion to consider refunding any fees

The department is not able to get involved with individual disputes.

Extra fees for private candidates The exam centre fee for private candidates must include all fees that the candidate could not reasonably avoid, for example an additional 'per candidate' fee or additional fees for reasonable adjustments.

For GCSE, AS and A levels, private candidates should not be charged any additional

fees by a centre if they choose to appeal, as this cost has been reflected in the level of

private candidates for GCSE, AS and A level. If a candidate registers after this date, they are still eligible for the subsidy, but the department will not be able to provide additional funding to cover late fees. The department will also not cover late fees for VTQs or other general qualifications, and the relevant dates and late fees will be set out on awarding organisations' websites for each qualification. The grant amount has been informed by market research and is, in the view of the department, sufficient to cover the reasonable costs incurred by the change in assessment approach this year. Centres cannot claim for further additional costs for

private candidates under this grant. However, it is at the discretion of centres whether

charge private candidates a higher rate. They can also choose to provide some subjects

within the grant, and others at a higher cost, if the centre feels it cannot deliver them

they wish to participate, and any exam centre can choose not to participate and so

and moderation processes required by the exam boards For VTQs and other general qualifications, all exam centres must: have a centre agreement with the relevant awarding organisations that they wish to make entries for meet all relevant requirements of that awarding organisation - this includes being able to deliver the quality assurance and moderation processes required • already offer the qualification or qualifications, or after conversation with the awarding organisation have agreement to adapt their centre agreement to cover the additional qualifications6, that they want to enter private candidates into

The exam centre must comply with JCQ, Ofqual and awarding organisation guidance on

the awarding of grades this year. In particular, the exam centre must make clear to

approach. This would include whether a candidate will be able to:

private candidates, at the point of registration, the main elements of its assessment

- Making a claim Exam centres' claims for the grant will be made retrospectively, through an online
- This information will be checked and verified through the claims service, which could include checking with the exam boards. Exam centres must make reasonable efforts to check that the candidate is not entered for the same subject at the same level anywhere else, for example through a candidate

private candidate entry

therefore a grade could not be awarded.

<u>UKPRN number</u> as soon as possible

When making a claim, the centre must provide:

qualifications, including details on how private candidates should be assessed. JCQ have also published guidance on assessing private candidates. Further guidance

VTQ awarding organisations will set out on their websites which of their qualifications

will be subject to alternative arrangements during this academic year. If you have any

queries regarding assessment, please address this with the relevant awarding body.

If you have a query about the grant or eligibility criteria which is not covered in this

guidance, contact DFE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk. Please state 'private

candidate support grant' in the subject field and whether your query relates to GCSE,

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Passports, travel and living abroad

If the centre offers different assessment approaches for the same specification, for example a choice of using existing evidence or creating new evidence, they must not charge candidates differently for the different approaches when claiming this grant. The exam centre must be able to provide the private candidate with reasonable adjustments on the grounds of disability in line with the Equality Act 2010 (at no additional cost to the candidate). In addition to providing the candidate with an assessed grade, exam centres will need to take responsibility for issuing results to the candidate and supporting them through

As part of their technical consultation, Ofqual have published draft information for centres on the submission of teacher assessed grades for GCSE and A level

AS or A level, or another qualification.

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