ofqual

Guidance

Student guide to awarding: summer 2021

Updated 22 July 2021

Contents
Introduction
General qualifications
Vocational and technical qualifications
Assessing more information
Appeals
Complaints

Print this page

Introduction

The government has said that many exams and assessments cannot be held this summer as a result of the disruption students have faced due to the pandemic.

Your teachers will instead submit grades for the exam boards, based on their professional judgment of what students would have achieved, including any progress to the next stage of your education, training, or employment.

This guide outlines the arrangements in place for awarding grades in summer 2021, and what you can do for additional information.

General qualifications

This information is relevant to all students in England who are entered for qualifications regulated by Ofqual and offered by AQA, OCR, Pearson, WJEC Eduqas, ASDAN and City & Guilds.

- GCSEs (including short course GCSEs)
- AS and A levels
- Project qualifications (EPQ and PPE)
- Advanced Extension Awards (AEAs) in maths

International GCSEs and international A levels are not Ofqual-regulated qualifications. For information on these qualifications, please contact the relevant exam board directly.

How GCSEs, AS and A levels will be awarded in summer 2021: a summary

How your grade will be determined

- your teacher will submit a grade with grades signed off by your head of department and your head teacher or principal before being submitted to the exam board
- not graded by an algorithm
- school and college assessments can continue - your school or college will let you know the timings of any assessments
- your teacher can use any evidence they think is fair and right
- your school or college will let you know the evidence they will use to determine your grade
- you will not be told what grades have been submitted for you
- if you think your school or college has not followed the process, contact your school or college to provide evidence on which your grades will be based

Evidence

- a range of evidence can be used, such as mocks, tests and work you have already done in class
- non-exam assessment (often known as coursework) should continue
- non-exam assessment can be used as evidence even if incomplete
- all A-level grades will be based only on your portfolio
- schools and colleges can use questions provided by exam boards if they choose to do so
- your school or college is expected to follow guidance when determining grades and the exam boards will check their policies for determining grades to make sure they are appropriate

Results days

- AS and A levels: 10 August
- GCSE: 12 August

Appeals

- if you think your school or college has not followed the process, contact your school or college in the first instance
- your school or college will let you know the evidence they will use to determine your grade
- you will not be told what grades have been submitted for you
- if you think your school or college has not followed the process, contact your school or college to provide evidence on which your grades will be based

Evidence

- a range of evidence can be used, such as mocks, tests and work you have already done in class
- non-exam assessment (often known as coursework) should continue
- non-exam assessment can be used as evidence even if incomplete
- all A-level grades will be based only on your portfolio
- schools and colleges can use questions provided by exam boards if they choose to do so
- your school or college is expected to follow guidance when determining grades and the exam boards will check their policies for determining grades to make sure they are appropriate

Results days

- AS and A levels: 10 August
- GCSE: 12 August

Appeals

- if you think your school or college has not followed the process, contact your school or college in the first instance
- your school or college will let you know the evidence they will use to determine your grade
- you will not be told what grades have been submitted for you
- if you think your school or college has not followed the process, contact your school or college to provide evidence on which your grades will be based

Timelines

April to May

You will continue to learn and may carry out some assessments during this time. This might include questions from the exam board. You will continue with any non-exam assessment (often known as coursework).

April to July

Your teachers will carry out their own quality assurance checks. There are plans to make sure that schools and colleges have followed the guidance when awarding grades.

May to June

You might have some of the marks you have achieved in assessments, but you won't be told your provisional grade. Your school or college will carry out checks to make sure that they have followed their policy properly when working out your grades. You can find out more about quality assurance further on in this guide.

10 June

The last date for your school or college to submit your teacher-assessed grades for GCSE, AS and A levels. Schools and colleges may have submitted grades before this deadline.

10 August

AS and A level results

12 August

GCSE results

August to September

Your school or college will give grade map for entry there is an appeals process in place. Your first step should be to speak to your school or college to seek their feedback and advice.

17 September

Schools and colleges must submit appeals to the exam boards by 17 September. Schools and colleges will then set deadlines for receiving appeals from students. **You must check the deadline your own school or college has set.**

Important note

It is important to remember that schools and colleges might take slightly different approaches, and so your individual timeline might look a bit different. Would the key dates are the same for all students. If you think your school or college has not followed the process, you should first talk to your school or college.

Evidence

What

- evidence about your performance throughout your course can be used to help your teacher decide your grade
- if you are unable to attend school or college because you are shielding or isolating, you should speak to your school or college who will consider how you could provide evidence of your learning
- your school or college can't tell you the grade they have submitted to your exam boards. We do, but they should not say what evidence they will use to determine your grade

Students who are entitled to reasonable adjustments

Schools and colleges are expected to make sure they make reasonable adjustments for eligible students. If some of the evidence the exam provisional without reasonable adjustment in place, your teachers should take that into account when determining your provisional grade. Part 3 of the coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for schools and colleges

Assessment in GCSE, AS and A-level art & design

Your grades will be based on your portfolio only. You should not be penalised if you were unable to complete practical exams due to circumstances beyond your control.

Separate results for practical and spoken language skills

GCSE, AS and A-level results will be issued for the following A-level sciences (biology, chemistry, physics) and A-level modern foreign languages (French, German, Spanish) the spoken language or practical skills tested. Based on work you have completed.

Take a stand

Your school or college will give you a grade that in line with the fair you have been taught, based on the work you have done. Your school or college will give you a grade that subject will not be drawn a grade, it is in one of your. You should discuss with your teacher if you're not sure what for you are entered for.

Composition of non-exam assessment

You should aim to complete your non-exam assessment (often known as coursework) as you have been advised by your teachers. The non-exam assessment (coursework) will be taken into account when your teacher decides your grade. If you are unable to complete non-exam assessment because you weren't given enough time to complete it, you should not be penalised. Your teachers will look at what you have been able to complete and can still use it as evidence of your ability.

Selecting the evidence used

Your school or college given will decide which evidence to use to assess the standard of which you're performing. They will look at and use the same sources of evidence for all students in a particular subject across the school or college. Your teacher or college will let you which pieces of work will count towards your grade. Letter your grade is submitted to the exam board. You will have the opportunity to raise any concerns about the evidence used with your school or college.

Your school or college given will decide which evidence to use to assess the standard of which you're performing. They will look at and use the same sources of evidence for all students in a particular subject across the school or college. Your teacher or college will let you which pieces of work will count towards your grade. Letter your grade is submitted to the exam board. You will have the opportunity to raise any concerns about the evidence used with your school or college.

Your school or college given will decide which evidence to use to assess the standard of which you're performing. They will look at and use the same sources of evidence for all students in a particular subject across the school or college. Your teacher or college will let you which pieces of work will count towards your grade. Letter your grade is submitted to the exam board. You will have the opportunity to raise any concerns about the evidence used with your school or college.

Taking exceptional circumstances into account

If you suffered a bereavement, for example, or there were other factors outside your control that affected your ability to perform your best when you were sitting exams, you should discuss this with your school or college.

Use of exam board tools

Your school or college will decide whether, and if so how, to use the exam board tools and they will let you if these need to be taken under exam conditions.

Quality assurance

Each school or college will have its own policy that sets out how they will determine grades. The exam boards have checks in place to make sure the grades are submitted.

Schools and colleges will carry out their own quality assurance of your grades. This might involve checking that grades are consistent between different teachers and that they are in line with what students have achieved in previous years.

Your head teacher or principal will submit a declaration to the exam boards confirming they have met the requirements set by the exam boards when determining your grades.

Once the exam boards receive the teacher-assessed grades they will ask every school and college to send them a sample of evidence, which will include a range of students, up of experienced examiners, will review the evidence from a sample of centres. This will include centres where there is a concern about the grades, or where there is a small or lack of evidence from previous years. Ofqual will also review the evidence from a sample of schools and colleges where the results are significantly different to their historical results, or where there is a concern. The exam boards will use this information to which higher or lower than in previous years.

In these sample checks, exam boards will check that the academic judgement has been made in accordance with the guidance and that the evidence is fair. The exam boards will ask the school or college to make the little and way and to the exam board grades. Exam boards will not issue results until they are satisfied with the outcome of any investigations.

What to do if you think your grade is wrong

Appeals

Your teacher should have received training, support and guidance on how to determine your grade. Your school or college will let you know the evidence and the judgements are to be said considered as possible.

Every year there are students who are disappointed with the grade they achieve. If they are disappointed with your grade, your school or college will let you know what to do next and what the next steps are.

If you are concerned that the grade you have received is wrong, there is an appeals process. If you appeal, your grade can go up, down, or stay the same.

The deadline by which your school or college must submit an appeal on your behalf to the exam board is 17 September (or 23 August if you are taking your A-level results early as a priority because you have not had your first choice of university place confirmed). Your school or college may set a deadline for receiving appeals from students earlier than these dates. **Check the deadline your own school or college has set.** Your school or college must submit appeals to exam review before it can send an appeal to the exam board.

The appeals process

- If you think your grade is wrong, you should first ask your school or college to check whether they made a mistake in determining or submitting the grade.
- If they identify a mistake, your school or college can submit a revised grade to the exam board to consider.
- If they don't identify an error but you still believe that your grade is wrong, you can ask your school or college to submit an appeal to the exam board on your behalf. You can appeal for any of the following reasons: there was an error in the way the grade was determined, there was an error in the way the evidence was used to assess the grade, the school or college did not make a reasonable judgment when assessing the evidence, or there was an error in the way the school or college did not make a reasonable judgment about your grade based on the evidence gathered. there was an error in the way the school or college followed the centre review process. the exam board will review the submitted evidence.
- The exam board will investigate according to the grounds on which the appeal is made. For example by considering whether your school or college followed its written process, or reviewing the evidence on which your grade was based.
- The exam board will consider if your grade was correct. They will check if your school or college followed its own policy and if it followed the process and procedure which affected your grade. A corrected grade could be higher or lower than the grade you were given on results day.
- The Final Arbiter (appeals) (Ofqual's Exam Procedures Review Service (EPRS)). You can apply to EPRS if the exam board decides that the grade you were awarded is correct, but you still believe that your school or college made a mistake or that you are still concerned that they may have been an error in the process used by the exam board to conduct the appeal. The EPRS can consider whether the exam board followed its own procedures when it made its decision. The exam board gave their right grade based on the evidence of your work. The exam board's decision is final. The EPRS can't change your grade, but it can tell the exam board to correct an error in its review process. Even if an error is found, your grade may stay the same.

Important things to remember

- teachers will share with you which pieces of work they will base their judgement on and how they will make their decision
- your school or college will let you know if and multiple checks on your grades. For example, they might check your school or college's approach and will be checking a sample of grades across the country.
- the appeals questions whether the original decision was a reasonable one, and not whether other reasonable decisions could have been made.
- if your school or college has made a mistake in determining or submitting the grade, or if the grade could not have reasonably been reached based on the evidence presented
- the exam board's assessments will provide an important safety net if there is clear evidence something went wrong when a grade was determined.
- your school or college is expected to submit an appeal on your behalf if you ask for one. If you're concerned your school or college won't submit an appeal, you should talk to your school or college.
- when your appeal is submitted, you will need to explain why you think your result was incorrect and should be changed.
- if you appeal, your grade can go up, down or stay the same.
- if your school or college has made a mistake in determining or developing your teacher-assessed grade, you should first discuss this with your school or college.
- if you have evidence of malpractice or maladministration, you can contact your exam board directly.
- the government has said that **appeals will be free for students in state-funded centres and for private candidates**

Autumn exam series

Exam boards will be offering exams in October for AS and A levels, and in November and December for GCSE, AS and A level. The exam boards will be offering a wide range of AS in biology, chemistry, physics, maths and further maths.

The exams will be in a standard format and as adaptations will be made other than reasonable adjustments for eligible students.

All subjects will be assessed by exam except art & design which will be assessed by a portfolio of work set by exam board. Your grade will be determined by your performance in this task.

The exams will assess you in the same way as had been planned for exams in summer 2021, including assessing you on a reduced number of topics for GCSE English literature, history and ancient history.

You can take exams in the autumn if you received a teacher-assessed grade in summer 2021 or the same subject in your exam board between that you would have been entered for in summer 2021 and you want to improve the grade you received in summer.

If you get a higher grade in your autumn exam then you get this summer, then you can use the exam board to provide a new certificate showing your higher grade.

Vocational and technical qualifications

How vocational and technical qualifications will be awarded in summer 2021: a summary

Qualifications most similar to GCSEs and A levels used for progression to further or higher education

For example, BTECs, OCR Cambridge Technicals and Cora Pipeline, which do not primarily focus on occupational skills.

Your results will be:

- determined by teacher or lecturer judgement
- based on evidence of your performance, such as coursework and any tests or coursework
- issued no later than for GCSEs and A levels

Other qualifications used for progression, but which are different from GCSEs or A levels

For example, Functional Skills and ESOL Skills for Life, which do not assess occupational skills, and which are taken when you are ready.

Assessments should continue for these qualifications. If you cannot safely access an assessment your result can be based on teacher judgement - in this case your results will be:

- determined by teacher or lecturer judgement
- based on evidence of your performance, such as coursework and any tests or coursework
- issued in the usual timescales

Qualifications that assess occupational skills or proficiency

For example, construction, plumbing and electrical qualifications.

Assessments:

- can continue as normal where possible
- can be adapted if needed
- may be delayed

Your results will be issued in the usual timescales once you have taken your assessment.

See Ofqual's qualification explorer tool to find out how your qualification will be awarded.

Further information on individual qualifications, including assessment methods used and evidence requirements, can be found on your awarding organisation's website.

How vocational, technical and other general qualifications will be awarded

The way that vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and other general qualifications will be awarded in 2021 takes into account the impact of the pandemic. Many students will have missed teaching and learning due to multiple lockdowns and disruption to their education, training or employment. This will vary by VTQ programmes of study.

The arrangements should enable you to be awarded a qualification and to progress in your learning or employment.

Qualifications that are similar to GCSEs, AS or A levels and used for progression to further or higher education

If you are studying for a qualification that is similar to or taken alongside GCSEs, AS or A levels and you are using it to progress to further or higher education (FE or higher education (HE)), then you are eligible for a result based partly on teacher judgement. Your teacher will use evidence of your performance, such as coursework and any tests, to assess your result using a variety of evidence, such as any assessments that have already been completed, or coursework, or other evidence of your performance in your subject area. These judgements will be usually accessed within your college, training provider or school, and then by the awarding organisation that you are registered with before you get your result.

Examples of these types of qualification are BTECs (Pearson) and OCR Cambridge Technicals in subjects such as business, digital media and health & social care.

If your qualification has an element of occupational competency, you will probably still need to complete the occupational competency part of your qualification to reach your overall grade. Learning provider or school can tell you if this is the case.

You should receive your results at the same time as GCSEs, AS and A levels results.

Other qualifications used for progression, but which are different from GCSEs or A levels

For other qualifications used for progression, but which are different from GCSEs or A levels and that are taken when you are ready, such as Functional Skills and ESOL Skills for Life, your assessment should take place as usual where possible.

Assessments should continue to take place when:

- is a college or training provider, employer premises, school, or alternative location, where it is safe for them to do so in line with public health guidance
- online in a wider range of venues, including at home.

Where neither of these options is possible, and you need a result to progress, then you may be able to receive a result based on a teacher-assessed grade. Your teacher or lecturer will use evidence of your performance in your subject area.

This should enable you to progress to the next stage of your study or employment this year and not be delayed. It will also mean that you will be able to progress and move on to other qualifications, for example if you need a Functional Skills qualification to support your apprenticeship. Speak to your college, training provider or school for further information.

Qualifications that require a demonstration of occupation or professional competence

If you are studying for a qualification that requires a demonstration of occupation or professional competence or proficiency, then you will need to be assessed on your ability to perform the occupation or to show professional competence or proficiency.

Assessments for these types of qualifications should be conducted in the usual timescales, although your assessment may be held in slightly different circumstances (using remote assessment, for example). If your assessment is not ready to be taken, your assessment may be delayed until it can be carried out in the usual way and in line with public health guidance.

Examples of these types of qualification are plumbing, accountancy, performing arts, construction, and veterinary nursing.

These arrangements should enable you to get a result that will allow you to progress.

Assessing more information

If you are studying for a qualification that requires a demonstration of occupation or professional competence or proficiency, then you will need to be assessed on your ability to perform the occupation or to show professional competence or proficiency.

Assessments for these types of qualifications should be conducted in the usual timescales, although your assessment may be held in slightly different circumstances (using remote assessment, for example). If your assessment is not ready to be taken, your assessment may be delayed until it can be carried out in the usual way and in line with public health guidance.

Examples of these types of qualification are plumbing, accountancy, performing arts, construction, and veterinary nursing.

These arrangements should enable you to get a result that will allow you to progress.

Appeals

Complaints

Arrangements for private candidates

Awarding organisations are required to include private candidates in their arrangements as far as possible. If you are a private candidate and you are unable to find a centre, contact your awarding organisation and they will link you with an available centre.

If you were offered or sat exams in January

If you are taking a vocational and technical qualification most like GCSEs, AS and A levels and you were either absent from January exams, or you feel that your performance was adversely affected by the pandemic and the most recent lockdown, you may still be able to receive a result using a teacher-assessed grade.

Talk to your college, training provider or school about the arrangements being offered by the awarding organisation that you are registered with.

What to do if you think your grade is wrong

If you are concerned that your teacher-assessed grade is wrong then your college, training provider or school and awarding organisation will have an appeals process in place to help you. Broadly speaking, the basis of appeals will be quite similar to that for GCSEs and A levels this year. During an appeal, the awarding organisation will check that centres have reasonably used academic judgement when deciding grades and that there have been no process errors or administrative errors. If you need more information check your awarding organisation's website.

For Level 3 qualifications, the deadline by which your training provider, school or college must submit an appeal on your behalf to the awarding organisation is 23 August if you want your appeal to be considered as a priority because you have not had your first choice of university place confirmed. **You must check the deadline your own training provider, school or college has set for receiving your appeal.**

Appeals relating to results for all other vocational, technical and other general qualifications should follow the usual process set out by your college, training provider or school, and awarding organisation.

Quality assurance for teacher-assessed grades

Quality assurance processes are the checks that will be carried out to make sure that your college, training provider or school has followed the guidance from awarding organisations when producing your grades.

If you are expecting a result based on a teacher-assessed grade, colleges, training providers and schools will put in place internal quality assurance arrangements. They should have a clear policy for how they are going to make judgements about the grades they think you deserve.

Your head teacher or principal may submit a declaration to the awarding organisation confirming they have met the awarding organisation's requirements for quality assurance.

The awarding organisation may review the arrangements that each college, training provider or school has put in place before grades are submitted. The awarding organisation may also request a sample of learner work that has been used to support the teacher-assessed grade as part of their checks. If the awarding organisation is concerned that the quality of the work does not reflect the grade submitted, they will speak to your college, training provider or school to resolve any concerns identified by the checks.

If you are taking an assessment or an adapted assessment, your college, training provider or school and awarding organisation should have quality assurance processes in place that are appropriate for your qualification – speak to them for further information.

Check arrangements for your specific qualification

See Ofqual's qualification explainer tool to find out how your qualification will be awarded in 2021.

What you can expect next

Your teacher or lecturer can let you know what is happening with your qualification – whether you will be expected to take your assessments, or if your results will be awarded using teacher-assessed grades. You should continue to study in the meantime.

Autumn exam series

Some awarding organisations already offer assessments in the autumn term or in January, and those that don't may choose to do so this year. You should talk to your college, training provider or school if you want to use this as an opportunity to get or improve your grade.

Accessing more information and support

Additional information for all qualifications

What you can expect next if you sat exams in January but feel your performance was affected

If you are taking vocational and technical qualifications similar to GCSEs, AS or A levels, and you were either absent from January exams, or you feel that your performance was adversely affected by the pandemic and the most recent lockdown, you may be able to receive a result using a teacher assessed grade.

Talk to your college, training provider or school about the arrangements being offered by the awarding organisation that you are registered with.

Having confidence in your grades

We know that you will want to be confident your grades are meaningful and serve their usual purpose.

Your teachers and lecturers are professionals who know you well. Schools, colleges and training providers understand that it is in your best interest that grades reflect what you know and can do, so that you can progress to the pathway that is most appropriate for you. Schools, colleges and training providers want you to make the best choices about your next steps and it wouldn't be helpful if you started studying a subject at a higher level that you aren't prepared for.

We have asked schools, colleges and training providers to assume that it is no easier or harder for a student to achieve a particular grade this year compared to previous years. Awarding organisations will also check a sample of evidence from a range of subjects from different schools, colleges and training providers.

Finding out your teacher-assessed grade

You are not able to find out your teacher-assessed grade for AS, A levels and GCSEs. You may know some of the marks awarded for some of the evidence your school or college is using but your teachers are not able to tell you your teacher assessed grade.

It will be the same situation for many vocational and technical qualifications. But there may be some where teachers or lecturers ordinarily submit marks or grades to awarding organisations and share this information with learners. These marks or grades will not yet have been through the awarding organisation's quality assurance and so should only be viewed as provisional.

If you are worried about teacher impartiality

Your teachers are professionals who have been asked to use a range of evidence to produce your teacher assessed grade. They have worked with other teachers to produce your teacher-assessed grade and your head teacher or principal must confirm that all grades have been determined appropriately. We've given guidance to schools, colleges and training providers on how to make objective judgements. If you still have concerns, talk to your school or college.

You can also speak to the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) for advice on discrimination concerns. EASS advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights. Complaining to your school or college or seeking advice from EASS about allegations of discrimination would not result in the grade you have been awarded being reviewed – this can only be requested through the appeals process.

Minimum amount of content that must be covered

There are no requirements about the minimum amount of content that should be taught or assessed for teacher-assessed grades to be submitted, but you will need to have covered enough content for the grade to be meaningful. Awarding organisations and exam boards may ask the head of your school, college or training provider to confirm that you have been taught (or studied, if you are a private candidate) an appropriate amount of content to provide the basis for a grade.

Prioritising appeals for access to university and college admissions

Awarding organisations and exam boards will support schools, colleges and training providers to prioritise appeals where results are needed to progress to higher education. Where possible these priority appeals will be completed by early September. Most appeals where a higher education place is not affected should be completed by the end of October.

If you choose to appeal, you should contact your preferred university or college straight away to make them aware of your situation.

> UCAS has extended the advisory deadline for universities to hold places to 8 September.

More information on 2021 qualifications and grading

There is more information from Ofqual on GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2021 and vocational, technical and other general qualifications in 2021. JCQ have also published information on GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2021.

> If you need more information on what's happening with a specific qualification that was scheduled to be taken in summer 2021, you can use our Summer 2021 qualification explainer tool.

Results and next steps

If you want more information on your next steps once you've received your results, contact the National Exam Results Helpline.

National Careers Service

Telephone: 0800 100 900

Lines are open from 08:00 to 20:00, Monday to Friday, and 10:00 to 17:00 on Saturdays.

Find out about call charges

Higher education applications and admissions

For any questions about higher education application and admissions you should contact the relevant institution directly. You can also contact UCAS for more information.

UCAS

Telephone: 0371 468 0 468

Lines are open Monday to Friday, 08:30 to 18:00.

Find out about call charges

> UCAS will be running a series of live events on the UCAS Facebook page where you can ask questions about your application.

Exam boards

- AQA
- Pearson
- OCR
- WJEC Eduqas

> Ofqual's Register contains information and website links for all awarding organisations regulated by Ofqual.

Ofqual

Ofqual

Email: public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 303 3344

The phone line is normally open from 09:00 to 17:00 on weekdays. Check out our website for opening times around results days.

Find out about call charges

Mental health support

Always make sure you speak to somebody if you are feeling anxious or struggling with your mental health. This might be a parent, carer or someone else you trust.

You can also contact:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Mind
- Young Minds
- NHS 111 - they can assist in providing the mental health support you may need

Equality Advisory and Support Service

You can contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) for advice on discrimination concerns. EASS advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights, across England, Scotland and Wales.

EASS

Telephone: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

Find out about call charges

Copyright

© Crown Copyright 2021

Open Government Licence

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated.

To view this licence, visit the OGL licence page at The National Archives or write to: Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU

Published by

Ofqual
Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH