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Education and childcare during coronavirus

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Guidance

Student guide to post-16 qualifications results: summer 2020 [HTML version]

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Contents

1. How grading works this year for GCSE, AS and A level
2. Awarding vocational & technical qualifications
3. How results are calculated for vocational & technical qualifications
4. What to expect on results day
5. What to do if you're unhappy with your results
6. The appeals process for GCSE, AS and A level
7. Appeals and complaints for vocational & technical qualifications
8. Autumn exam series for GCSE, AS and A level
9. Questions and answers
10. Where to find more support
11. Further support: summary

1. How grading works this year for GCSE, AS and A level

Schools and colleges provided exam boards with a centre assessment grade for each student in every GCSE, AS or A level subject they planned to take this summer, and a rank order of students by their expected performance.

To make sure standards are aligned across schools and colleges, all grades will be standardised by exam boards, using a model developed by Ofqual. The model will ensure that national results are broadly in line with those in previous years. It will consider each centre individually, comparing centre assessment grades to the centre's historical results taking into account the prior attainment of the current students, to judge whether its centre assessment grades are more generous or severe than predicted.

If grading judgements in a school or college appear severe or generous, exam boards will adjust the grades of some or all of those students up or down accordingly, using the rank order. This will amend the centre assessment grades to align them with the predicted grade distribution.

For a typical centre, exam boards will predict the grade distribution in each subject and allocate grades based on the following sources of evidence.

1. The centre's historical performance in the subject – that is, the grades of every student taking the qualification at that centre over a number of years. The exact number of years considered will depend on the qualification.
2. The prior attainment of the centre's students in previous years – that is, how these students, whose examined grades in that subject are available, performed in exams previously. For AS and A level qualifications this looks back to their GCSEs. For GCSEs this looks back to their results on national assessments.
3. The prior attainment for those students sitting the subject this year, compared to previous years.
4. Information submitted by the centre this year.

For each centre in every subject, exam boards will use historical performance data to determine the proportion of candidates achieving each grade in previous years.

They will check this year's prior attainment against previous years and adjust the predicted grade distribution if it's different. Depending on their ability, the grade distribution might be adjusted up or down.

Exam boards then use this grade distribution to allocate grades to students, without changing the rank order. For some students, the grade they are allocated won't be the same as the centre assessment grade that was submitted.

Before results are issued, exam boards will compare the national results with those in previous years - to check they are not too generous or too severe for students this summer.

2. Awarding vocational & technical qualifications

2.1 How does it work?

As vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) come in a range of shapes and sizes, and fulfil a range of purposes, they are not all being treated in the same way. You might know them better as Applied Generals, Tech Levels, BTECs, Cambridge Nationals, Diplomas, Technical Certificates or Technical Awards.

In all cases, exam boards and awarding organisations have made sure that the qualifications have been assessed in the most fair and consistent way and they will be recognised by educational establishments and employers. See our online qualifications explainer tool for more information.

2.2 Calculated results

The majority of students will receive a calculated grade for most qualifications. However, unlike GCSEs, AS and A levels, there is no overall statistical standardisation model. Awarding organisations are delivering results and carrying out quality assurance in line with Ofqual's rules. The next page explains how calculated results are decided.

2.3 Adapted assessments

Calculated results aren't appropriate for all qualifications, for example, because there are practical skills that need to be tested or because there isn't enough evidence available for a calculated result to be valid and reliable. Where that's the case, the awarding organisation may have provided adapted assessments. For example, you might have been asked to take assessments online instead of in the classroom or demonstrate a procedure on a mannequin instead of a person. This will allow you to receive a result in the normal way.

2.4 Delay

There are some qualifications where the only option was to delay the assessment. This might be because there was no way to carry out an adapted assessment safely or authentically.

> If your assessment has been delayed, you may not get a result for that qualification this summer. Your school or college will tell you when you can next sit the assessment.

3. How results are calculated for vocational & technical qualifications

Unlike GCSE, AS and A levels, there is no overarching statistical standardisation model, but Ofqual requires that all AOs follow the same broad process to calculate grades. Awarding organisations are delivering the results and carrying out quality assurance in line with Ofqual's Extraordinary regulatory framework for VTQ, which has been designed to allow the awarding organisations flexibility to determine the most suitable approach for their qualifications.

Different approaches will be taken depending on the evidence available, and the nature and structure of a qualification.

This means that the way your result has been calculated for one qualification, may be different to the way it has been calculated for another. Whatever the exact approach that is taken to issuing a calculated result, awarding organisations need to:

- gather evidence such as previously banked assessment results, centre assessment grades, school or college results from recent years
- quality-assure the evidence that is to be relied upon
- ensure that the outcomes are not out of line with expectations

Ofqual has worked with awarding organisations to support them through the process of applying this to their qualifications.

3.1 The stages

1. Evidence: centre assessment grade, awarding organisation calculated grade or both.
2. Quality assurance by the awarding organisation.
3. Overall check on outcomes to ensure they are not out of line with expectations.

Minimum evidential threshold: there must be at least one trusted source of evidence and a sufficiently robust method of quality assurance.

4. What to expect on results day

Your school or college receives your results and will pass these onto you. Even though grades have been awarded differently this year, they will look exactly the same as any other year on the results slips and your certificates. Your result will be your final calculated grade - this may not be the same as the centre assessment grade submitted by your school or college because it will have been standardised.

Schools and colleges are not allowed to tell you your centre assessment grade before results days. Once you have received your results, you should speak to your school or college for more information if you want to know your centre assessment grade.You can find more information about your right to access that information on the Information Commissioner's Office website. Remember though, that the calculated grade on your results slip is the grade that counts.

If your results aren't what you were expecting, you should talk to your school or college about your options.

For more information on results days for other technical qualifications, contact your school or college.

4.1 Results dates

AS & A levels and equivalent level 3 qualifications: 13 August

GCSEs and equivalent level 1, level 2 and level 1/2 qualifications: 20 August

4.2 Collecting your results

> Check with your school or college to find out how it will give you your results.

> Schools and colleges are not allowed to give results out until after 8am on results day.

Your school or college receives your results and will pass these onto you. Even though grades have been awarded differently this year, they will look exactly the same as any other year on the results slips and your certificates.

Your result will be your final calculated grade - this may not be the same as the centre assessment grade submitted by your school or college because it will have been standardised.

Schools and colleges are not allowed to tell you your centre assessment grade before results days. Once you have received your results, you should speak to your school or college for more information if you want to know your centre assessment grade. Remember though, that the calculated grade on your results slip is the grade that counts.

If your results aren't what you were expecting, you should talk to your school or college about your options. You can also find more information on the appeals arrangements and the autumn exam series in this guide.

For more information on results days for other technical qualifications, contact your school or college.

4.3 Things to remember

Always speak to someone if you are feeling anxious about your results. See 'Where to find more support' to find out where to get more support.

If your results aren't what you were expecting, speak to your school or college.

5. What to do if you're unhappy with your results

You should first speak to your school or college. It's important that you understand on what basis you can and can't appeal your results when deciding your next steps. Only your school or college can submit an appeal on your behalf

5.1 I think there might have been a mistake when my school or college submitted my centre assessment grade

You can ask your school or college to check whether it made an error when submitting your centre assessment grade or your position in the rank order. If your school or college does think it made a mistake, it can submit an appeal to the exam board, but it must be supported by clear evidence that an error had been made.

5.2 I think the exam board might have made a mistake when calculating my grade

Your school or college can appeal to an exam board on your behalf if it believes the exam board used the wrong data when calculating grades or incorrectly communicated the grades calculated. You should discuss this with your school or college.

5.3 I don't agree with the centre assessment grade that I was given by my teacher

Your school or college submitted the grades it believes you were most likely to achieve if exams had gone ahead. We know many students wanted to be able to challenge their centre assessment grades if they were unhappy with them, but we judged this could not be done consistently and fairly. Any appeal would have to be done by someone better placed than your teachers to judge your likely grade if exams had taken place – as exams were cancelled, we don't think there is such a person. And because of the role of the rank order in grading this year, an appeal would affect other students: if one student successfully appealed against their position in the rank order, it could mean that other students' grades were lowered.

You can't appeal your grade because you don't agree with the centre assessment grade or rank order position submitted by your school or college.

If you'd like an opportunity to improve your grade, you can choose to sit exams in the autumn series instead. If you have concerns about bias, discrimination or something else that suggests that your school or college did not behave with care or integrity when determining your centre assessment grade or rank order information, see 'The appeals process'.

5.4 I don't agree with the statistical standardisation model, and now I think my result is wrong

Standardisation is important to make sure grades across different schools and colleges are of a consistent standard and so your school or college can't appeal your grade on your behalf because it does not agree with the standardisation model. Your school or college can appeal to the exam board on your behalf if it believes the exam board used the wrong data when it calculated the centre's grades. If you'd like an opportunity to improve your grade, you can choose to sit exams in the autumn exam series instead.

5.5 What if my school or college won't submit an appeal on my behalf?

If your school or college won't submit an appeal to the exam board on your behalf, it must have a process in place for you to ask for a review of that decision.

You should first raise this with your school or college. If you wish to complain, you should speak to the exam board for further guidance.

5.6 I think I could have done better if I had sat my exams

You can't appeal your grade because you think you would have done better in your exams. If you would prefer to take exams you can do so in the autumn exam series.

5.7 I'm entitled to reasonable adjustments due to my disability, and I don't think this was taken into account when determining my centre assessment grade

If you have concerns that any reasonable adjustments weren't taken into account when determining your centre assessment grade or rank order information, you should raise these concerns directly with your school or college. If you have evidence of serious malpractice on the part of your school or college, it may be appropriate to bring those concerns directly to the exam board instead. See 'The appeals process' for more information.

5.8 I think my result, or someone else's, has been affected by wrongdoing such as discrimination or bias

If you have concerns about bias, discrimination or any other factor that suggests that your school or college did not behave with care or integrity when determining your centre assessment grade or rank order information you should first raise these concerns with your school or college. Your school or college must have a procedure in place to deal with such complaints. If you have evidence of serious malpractice on the part of your school or college, it may be appropriate to bring those concerns directly to the exam board initially instead. Where there is evidence, we require exam boards to investigate allegations as potential malpractice or maladministration See 'The appeals process' for more information.

6. The appeals process for GCSE, AS and A level

> **Deadline for appeal**: 17 September 2020

Firstly, you must make sure that you're clear on what basis you can appeal your result; you can only appeal if you think there has been an error in the process. You can't appeal just because you do not agree with the grade you received.

You should speak to your school or college if you think there may have been an error and you might have reason to appeal. Only schools and colleges can submit an appeal. This also applies to private candidates - you must ask the centre that submitted your centre assessment grade to appeal on your behalf.

Remember that if you appeal your grade, it can go up, down or stay the same. If someone else in your cohort appeals their grade and the exam board finds an issue that affects other students' results, your grade is protected and will not go down if the appeal was not made on your behalf.

If your school or college is unhappy with the outcome of the process, it can appeal this decision through Ofqual's Examination Procedures Review Service.

If you have concerns about bias, discrimination or something else that suggests that your school or college did not behave with care or integrity when determining centre assessment grade or rank order information, you should first raise these concerns with your school or college. Your school or college must have a procedure to deal with complaints. If you are concerned that you have evidence of serious malpractice by the school or college, it may be appropriate to bring those concerns directly to the exam board.

We require exam boards to consider this as potential malpractice or maladministration. They must investigate cases where there is evidence to suggest that the centre assessment grades or rank order information submitted may not have been determined appropriately. Remember that you would need to have evidence for this to be investigated by the exam board.

Where the investigation finds that the centre assessment grade or rank order information was determined inappropriately and that this has led to an incorrect final result, the exam board must consider the action needed, including correcting that result if appropriate.

Such allegations would be very serious. The national results do not indicate bias on the part of teachers. This does not mean that there are not individual cases of bias, but we expect them to be rare. You can find out more information on how to make a complaint of malpractice or maladministration in our student guide to appeals and malpractice or maladministration complaints.

7. Appeals and complaints for vocational & technical qualifications

As vocational and technical qualifications come in a range of shapes and sizes, and fulfil a range of purposes, they are not all being treated in the same way and the grounds for appeal may vary. You should speak to your school or college if you think you might have reason to appeal.

Schools and colleges can submit an appeal on your behalf, and in some cases awarding organisations are accepting appeals directly from learners. Private candidates can appeal directly.

! **Remember that if you appeal your grade, it can go up, down or stay the same.**

Awarding organisations:

- must allow reasonable time for learners and centres to decide whether to request an appeal
- may charge a fee for providing some information
- are required to publish their appeals process on their website

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the appeals process, you can make a complaint to Ofqual.

If you have concerns about bias, discrimination or anything else that suggests that your school or college did not behave with care or integrity when determining a centre assessment grade or providing evidence to the awarding organisation, you should normally raise these concerns with your school or college. In some cases it may be appropriate to bring those concerns directly to the awarding organisation instead.

Check your qualification's awarding organisation website for further details on appeals.

7.1 Will I get another opportunity to take my assessment?

For many vocational & technical qualifications there are already a number of assessment opportunities throughout the year. Some awarding organisations are providing additional assessment opportunities for some qualifications. Talk to your school or college to see if this applies to your qualification.

7.2 I haven't been assigned a grade – what do I do?

Some learners might not have received a result and were expecting to, in which case you should first speak to your school or college.

8. Autumn exam series for GCSE, AS and A level

The autumn exam series is an opportunity for students who either were unable to receive a calculated grade in the summer, or who want to try to improve their grade, to sit their exams. You should speak to your school or college if you want to enter for the autumn exam series.

8.1 Do I have to sit exams in all of my subjects?

No. You can choose take as many subjects in the autumn as you want to. But if you want to take a particular subject, you will need to take all the exam papers in that subject.

8.2 Which grade will stand if I sit the exams?

If you choose to take exams in the autumn or next summer and achieve a different grade from the grade you received this summer, you will be able to use the higher of the 2 grades to show to universities, colleges and employers in future.

8.3 Will the number or format of the exam papers be different?

No. You will have the same number of exams in each subject and they will be in the same format as the summer 2020 exams would have been. However, there will not be any non-exam assessment, except in art & design.

8.4 Will the non-exam assessment I have done count towards my grade?

No. The autumn results will be based on your exam performance alone, there will be no non-exam assessment and results from previous non-exam assessments will not carry over. In art & design, grades will be based on your performance in a new task, set and marked by the exam board and taken under the normal supervised conditions.

8.5 Who will enter me for the exam?

The Department for Education has confirmed that the school or college that entered you for exams in the summer is responsible for entering you in the autumn. This includes private candidates (where they made summer exam entries by 20 March). But if this is not convenient (for example, if you've moved to another part of the country), your school or college can agree other arrangements on your behalf.

The exception to this is if you are moving school or college in the autumn and will be continuing to study English or maths because you achieved a grade 3 or below. In that case you should speak to your new school or college who will arrange entries for you.

8.6 Can I enter the autumn series if I wasn't entered this summer?

No. Only students who had entered for the summer exams and students who the exam board believes had intended to enter for those exams can enter in the autumn series. Students who would normally be entitled to take GCSEs in English language and maths in November (usually resitting students) will also be able to take exams in those subjects.

8.7 If I take exams in the autumn will I still be able to start my college or university course?

You should speak to the relevant institution directly as they make their own admission decisions. In many cases, students who sit these examinations will be looking at starting their college or university studies in the following autumn - 2021. An exception to this is where a course has a January or February start date and, in this case, you may be able to start right away. The best advice is to contact the university or college for specific information.

8.8 I am disabled and need reasonable adjustments to sit my exam in the autumn - how do I request these?

The normal range of reasonable adjustments should be available for disabled students who take choose to take exams in the autumn. The school or college that enters you for the exams will be able to advise you.

8.9 Deadlines for entry

AS & A levels: 4 September 2020

GCSEs except English language and maths: 18 September 2020

GCSEs in English language and maths: 4 October 2020

8.10 Exam dates

AS & A levels: 5 October to 23 October 2020

GCSEs: 2 November to 23 November 2020

9. Questions and answers

9.1 How will you standardise my GCSE, AS or A level grade?

Your school or college has sent the exam boards a centre assessment grade for you in each of your subjects, and a rank order of you and your classmates in order of your expected performance. Exam boards will standardise this information using your centre's previous results and your year group's performance in GCSEs (for A levels) or Key Stage 2 assessments (for GCSEs). They will adjust grades where needed to bring consistency to different centre judgements across all schools and colleges and to make sure your results have equal currency with previous years.

9.2 Will standardisation mean that my final grade will be lower than my centre assessment grade?

Not necessarily. If grading judgements in a school or college appear too high or too low, exam boards will adjust some or all of the grades upwards or downwards accordingly, using the rank order. Grades will only be adjusted where needed to bring them closer to what the evidence shows students would have been most likely to achieve if exams had gone ahead. It is important to remember that the centre assessment grade submitted by your school or college is just one part of the process of calculating your final grade.

Grades are being standardised to make sure your grade is valued by universities and employers and to be fair to students in previous and future years. There's more information about how grades are being standardised on our website.

9.3 I want to know my centre assessment grade - can my school or college tell me?

Remember that your final grade is the grade that counts. Your school or college is not allowed to tell you your centre assessment grade before results day. After results day, you can ask your school or college for more information if you want to.

9.4 I'm really anxious about my results, what can I do?

It's normal to feel anxious, and we understand it might be particularly worrying with the exceptional arrangements this year. If you feel anxious, it's important to talk to someone. You can find more information on where to find additional support in this guide.

9.5 Will our grades mean anything if we haven't done exams?

The arrangements we've put in place this year will make sure that your results will have the same currency as in any other year so you can compete on a level playing field for opportunities with students from previous and future years.

9.6 If I'm unhappy with my grades what can I do?

You should speak to your school or college about your options - see 'What to do if you're unhappy with your results' for more information. You can also choose to sit exams for one or more of your qualifications in the autumn series if you want the opportunity to improve your grade. You will be able to use the highest grade.

9.7 I'm doing a vocational qualification (for example, BTEC, Cambridge National) - what arrangements apply to my qualification?

Depending on the qualification you're taking, many of the same points apply – but see 'Awarding vocational & technical qualifications', 'How results are calculated for vocational & technical qualifications' and 'Appeals and complaints for vocational & technical Qualifications' for further details. In particular, vocational & technical qualifications taken alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels are using very similar arrangements, although in many cases any units you had already taken will also be factored into your final result.

9.8 I didn't try my best in my mocks, will this impact on my grade?

Your centre assessment grade is not just your mock result. Your teacher has been asked to use a range of evidence that they will have seen from across your time studying for your qualifications, not just your mocks, when producing your centre assessment grades.

9.9 I don't think my teacher likes me - will this affect my grade?

All teachers want the best for their students. Your teachers are professionals who have been asked to use a range of evidence to produce your centre assessment grade. They have worked with other teachers to produce the centre assessment grade and the head of centre must confirm that all grades have been determined appropriately – so the judgement has been made by your school or college, not an individual teacher. We've also given guidance to schools and colleges on how to make objective judgements.

10. Where to find more support

10.1 More information on the awarding process

We have published more resources and information about this year's awarding process.

10.2 Results, appeals, complaints and next steps

> For higher education questions, such as application and admissions, you may need to contact the relevant institution directly.

Exam Results Helpline

Telephone 0800 100 900

nationalcareers.service.gov.uk

The Exam Results Helpline can provide information on appeals, complaints, or what your next steps may be once you've received your results.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

Telephone 0371 468 0 468

ucas.com

UCAS can provide information on university applications.

10.3 Mental Health Support

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:

Young Minds

Text YM to 85258

youngminds.org.uk

Childline

Telephone 0800 11 11

childline.org.uk

Your GP: call and ask for an emergency appointment.

NHS 111

Telephone 111

111.nhs.uk

They can assist in providing the mental health support you may need.

10.4 Ofqual and exam boards

Ofqual

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Contact the Ofqual student support phoneline if you want to find out more about how you were graded, the autumn exams series, how to make an appeal or raise a concern about bias or discrimination.

AQA

Telephone 0800 197 7162

www.aqa.org.uk

OCR

Telephone 01223 553 998

www.ocr.org.uk

Pearson

Telephone 0345 618 0440

www.pearson.com

WJEC Eduqas

Telephone 029 2105 5443

www.eduqas.co.uk

11. Further support: summary

You can find contact details and information about where to get additional support in this guide. However, if you're not sure which is the correct organisation to contact, the information below should help you to identify where to start.

11.1 I want to know whether I can appeal

You should speak to your school or college first. Only schools or colleges can submit an appeal.

For vocational and technical qualifications, you should discuss this with your school or college as different exam boards may have different arrangements in place.

11.2 My results aren't what I wanted and I don't know what to do next

You should speak to your school or college who will be able to give you advice on your options. You can also contact the Exam Results Helpline. If you feel that you are struggling with your mental health, you should speak to your parent, carer or someone you trust.

11.3 My school or college won't submit an appeal, and it won't let me appeal its decision

Firstly, you must ensure that you have checked on what grounds a school or college is able to appeal - see 'What to do if you're unhappy with your results'. ou can then contact the relevant exam board if the school or college refuses to ask for a review of its decision. Remember, this does not mean that the exam board will allow you to appeal directly.

11.4 I want more information on the appeals procedure

You can contact the Exam Results Helpline. You can also contact Ofqual.

For vocational & technical qualifications, you may wish to contact the relevant awarding organisation to find more information on their specific appeals process.

11.5 I want to enter for exams in the autumn

For GCSEs, AS and A levels you should speak to the school or college where you were due to sit exams in the summer, who can give you more information and arrange entries for you. This also applies if you are a private candidate. The exception to this is if you are moving school or college in the autumn and will be continuing to study English or maths because you achieved a grade 3 or below. In that case you should speak to your new school or college who will arrange entries for you.

For vocational qualifications, speak to your school or college, or check the relevant exam board's website for more information on any assessment windows.

11.6 I want to find out my centre assessment grade

Remember that your final grade is the grade that counts. Your school or college is not allowed to tell you your centre assessment grade before results day. You should speak to your school or college for more information if you want to know your centre assessment grade once you have received your results. You can find more information about your right to access that information on the Information Commissioner's Office website.

11.7 I have questions about my university application

You should initially contact your school or college for support. You may also choose to contact UCAS for more information and guidance, or for specific queries you may choose to contact the institution directly.

11.8 I have questions about my further education application

You should contact the school, college or training provider that you have applied to if you wish to discuss your application.

11.9 I want to complain about an exam board

You should first contact the exam board who will have a complaints procedure in place. Once you have completed the exam board's procedure, if you feel your complaint has not been resolved you may then choose to contact Ofqual.

11.10 I think that there has been wrong doing when developing my centre assessment grade

You should discuss this with your school or college. If you're concerned you have evidence of serious wrongdoing, such as malpractice or maladministration, you may wish to contact the relevant exam board directly instead. You can find out more information on how to You can find out more information on how to make a complaint of malpractice or maladministration in our student guide to appeals and malpractice or maladministration complaints.

11.11 I want to know more about how the standardisation model works

You can find a range of resources on Ofqual's website to find out more about how the standardisation model works.

11.12 I want to know when I'll get my certificate

You should first contact your school or college if you want more information about your certificates.

11.13 There is an error in my details on my results slip

Contact your school or college to make them aware. You should do this as quickly as possible. They can then contact the relevant exam board on your behalf.

11.14 Still not sure?

If you're still unsure who to contact, you should either discuss your concerns with your school or college, or contact the Exam Results Helpline who will be able to point you in the right direction.

Is this page useful? Yes No

Is there anything wrong with this page?

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

The UK has left the EU

Check the new rules for January 2021

Services and information

Benefits
Births, deaths, marriages and care
Business and self-employed
Childcare and parenting
Citizenship and living in the UK
Crime, justice and the law
Disabled people
Driving and transport

Education and learning
Employing people
Environment and countryside
Housing and local services
Money and tax
Passports, travel and living abroad
Visas and immigration
Working, jobs and pensions

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