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Guidance

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

Updated 21 August 2020

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1. Overview

> Updated 19 August 2020

This year, because exams were cancelled due to COVID-19, schools and colleges provided exam boards with a 'centre assessment grade' for each student. These have been awarded for every subject students would have taken this summer for GCSE, AS, A level, EPQ and AEA in maths qualifications.

Your centre assessment grade is your school or college's judgement of the grade it believes you would most likely have achieved if you had taken your exam this year. To decide this grade, schools and colleges looked at a range of evidence, including non-exam assessment, homework assignments and mock exams. Your school or college was also asked to provide a rank order of students within each grade in a subject, based on who they felt was most secure in achieving that grade.

The exceptional arrangements put in place for this year also included a standardisation process designed to align standards across schools and colleges. This produced results for each student called 'calculated grades'. You can find out more about the standardisation process on our website.

Following our statement on 17 August, you will receive either your centre assessment grade or your calculated grade – whichever one is higher. Your grade on your certificate will look the same as any other year.

Most vocational and technical qualifications are structured differently to A levels and GCSEs, and so the approach to awarding developed by awarding organisations has also been different. Not all used centre assessment grades. If they did, it was usually as one of a number of sources of evidence. Most vocational and technical qualifications did not use statistical modelling. Where it was used, those few awarding organisations have considered what our announcement on 17 August means for their qualifications.

You can appeal your grade if you have evidence of an administrative error. You cannot appeal the grade you receive on the basis of your mock exam results, as those were taken into account in deciding your centre assessed grade. If you have evidence of bias, discrimination or wrongdoing in the determination of your centre assessment grade you should either raise it directly with your school or with the relevant exam board.

1.1 For AS and A levels

If your centre assessment grade is higher than the calculated grade you received on 13 August, you will now receive the centre assessment grade. The exam boards are working to provide new results slips as soon as possible. Your certificate will show whichever grade is higher. If you have made a higher education application, your new grade has been provided to UCAS.

1.2 For GCSEs

Your school or college will give you your results on 20 August. Again, this will be your centre assessment grade or your calculated grade, whichever is higher.

1.3 For Vocational and Technical Qualifications

We have been informed that a small number of awarding organisations are consequently going to reissue results. We have been assured by awarding organisations that no grades will be reduced as a result of this process.

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 grades are awarded in the fairest and most consistent way. See our online qualifications explainer tool for more information.

2.2 Calculated results

Most students taking VTQs will receive a calculated grade for their qualifications. However, unlike GCSEs, AS and A levels, no overall statistical standardisation model has been used. Awarding organisations are delivering results and carrying out quality assurance in line with Ofqual's rules. The next section 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, such as barbering, floristry or vehicle maintenance, 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 what are called 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 reliably. If your assessment has been delayed, you may not get a result for that qualification this summer. Our online qualifications explainer tool provides details of when the next assessment opportunities will be and 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, no overarching statistical standardisation model has been used, but Ofqual requires that all awarding organisations follow the same broad process to calculate grades. Awarding organisations are delivering results and carrying out quality assurance in line with Ofqual's 'Extraordinary regulatory framework for VTQ'. This has been designed to allow the awarding organisations to apply the most suitable approach for their qualifications.

Awarding organisations will take different approaches depending on the evidence available, and the nature and structure of a qualification.

This means that the way your result has been calculated for 1 qualification, may be different to the way it has been calculated for another. However, all awarding organisations need to:

- gather evidence such as results for previously completed internal or unit assessments, centre assessment grades, and school or college results from recent years
- check the evidence is good quality, to make sure it is accurate and consistent
- ensure that the outcomes are not out of line with expectations

There must be at least one trusted source of evidence and a sufficiently robust method of quality assurance.

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

There are a few instances where a VTQ awarding organisation has used a statistical standardisation model. In these cases, they have reviewed what it means for their qualifications. A small number of awarding organisations are going to reissue results. Where qualification-level centre assessment grades have been used, the awarding organisation has been able to recalculate results and issue them on time. Others will need more time, because their approach is more complex. We have been assured that no grades will be reduced as a result of this process. If you have questions about vocational and technical qualifications you are taking, you should speak to your awarding organisation. There is further information about the grading of vocational and technical qualifications on our website.

4. What to expect on GCSE results day

> Results day for GCSEs and equivalent level 1, level 2 and level 1/2 qualifications is 20 August.

4.1 Collecting your results

You should check with your school or college to find out how it will give you your results.

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

Your result will be either your centre assessment grade or your calculated grade, whichever is higher.

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.

4.2 Things to remember

Always speak to someone if you are feeling anxious about your results. See 'where to find more support' for where you can go to get advice. ## GCSE, AS, A level, extended project qualification and advanced extension award: what to do if you're unhappy with your results

First of all, you should 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.

4.3 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 administrative error when submitting your centre assessment grade or rank order information. Administrative errors might include, for example, mixing up 2 students with similar names, or accidentally copying across the wrong data, but do not relate to the professional judgements of centres in giving centre assessment grades. If your school or college thinks 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.

4.4 I don't agree with the centre assessment grade that I was given by my teachers

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 decided by someone better placed than your teachers to judge your likely grade if exams had taken place. Because exams were cancelled, we don't think there is such a person. This means you can't appeal your grade just because you don't agree with the centre assessment grade submitted by your school or college.

Your school or college can't appeal against the centre assessment grades that they decided were correct when they submitted it to the exam board. The head of centre made a declaration to confirm that the centre assessment grades it provided were the grades its students were most likely to have received if the exams had gone ahead.

If you'd like an opportunity to improve your grade, you can choose to sit exams in the autumn, or in summer 2021, 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, see 'student guide to appeals, malpractice & maladministration complaints'.

4.5 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 for GCSE, AS and A level.

4.6 My mock result was higher than my centre assessment grade

You can't appeal your grade to ask to be given your mock exam result. You will receive your centre assessment grade or calculated grade, whichever is higher. Your school or college would have considered your mock results when deciding your centre assessment grades.

4.7 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 speak to your school or college. If you have evidence of serious malpractice (wrongdoing) on the part of your school or college, it may be appropriate to bring those concerns directly to the exam board instead. See 'student guide to appeals, malpractice & maladministration complaints'.

> Note: reasonable adjustments are changes made to an assessment or to the way an assessment is conducted that reduce or remove a disadvantage caused by a student's disability. They are needed because some disabilities can make it harder for students to show what they know and can do in an assessment than it would have been had the student not been disabled. The Equality Act 2010 requires exam boards to make reasonable adjustments to assessments for disabled students.

4.8 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 you should first raise these concerns with your school or college.

Your school or college must have a system in place to deal with these complaints. If you have evidence of serious malpractice (wrongdoing) 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 to suggest that the centre assessment grades may not have been determined appropriately, we require exam boards to investigate allegations as potential malpractice or maladministration. You would need to have evidence for this to be investigated by the exam board. Some examples of evidence are provided in our student guide to appeals and malpractice or maladministration complaints.

If the investigation finds that the centre assessment grade or rank order information was not determined appropriately 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, and we expect them to be rare. You can find out more information on how to make a complaint of malpractice in our student guide to appeals and malpractice or maladministration complaints.

4.9 I have missed out on my university place because the calculated grade I received for my A levels was lower than the centre assessed grade that I will now receive. What can I do?

You should speak to your university about your position or contact UCAS for further advice.

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

Deadline for appeal: 17 September 2020

> If you have concerns about how your grades were arrived at, you should talk to your school or college about your options.

Only schools and colleges can submit an appeal. This also applies to private candidates (students who do not study in a school or college.) If this applies to you, you must ask the centre that submitted your centre assessment grade to appeal on your behalf.

It is important to remember that:

- you can ask your school or college to check whether it made a mistake when submitting data to the exam board. If your school or college finds it made a mistake in the data it provided it can ask the exam board to correct it
- your school or college can appeal to the exam board on your behalf if it believes the exam board made a mistake when it communicated your grades
- you cannot challenge your school or college under the appeals process on the centre assessment grades it submitted or your rank order positions – any appeal would have to be undertaken by someone better placed than your teachers to judge your likely grade if exams had taken place; in the unique circumstances of this summer, we do not believe there is such a person
- you cannot appeal because your mock exam result was higher than your grade. Your mock grade will have been taken into account in deciding your centre assessment grade. You will either receive your centre assessment grade or your calculated grade (whichever is higher)

> This summer, your grade is protected and will not go down as a result of an appeal.

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

If your school or college won't submit an appeal on your behalf, it must have a process in place for you to ask for a review of that decision, so that someone else at your centre considers your request. You should ask your school or college about this. If you wish to complain that your school or college does not have a process in place for you to do this, you should follow your school or college's complaints process in the first instance. If your complaint is not resolved, you can speak to the exam board for further guidance.

Where you believe there may have been an error when your school or college submitted your centre assessment grade to the exam board or when the exam board communicated your result, you should first speak to your school or college. Your school or college should be able to explain how it made its judgement, and what evidence it relied on. Even where there is no evidence of an error being made, understanding how your centre made a judgement and what evidence it took into account, might help you to understand the grade you have been given.

6. 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, for example, because the awarding organisation did not apply procedures consistently, properly and fairly. 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 to the awarding organisation.

Awarding organisations:

- must allow reasonable time for learners and centres to decide whether to request an appeal
- 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.

6.1 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. Our online qualifications explainer tool provides details of when the next assessment opportunities will be. Talk to your school or college to see if this applies to your qualification.

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

Some learners might not have received a result, or not received their grade when they were expecting to. In this case you should first speak to your school or college to find out why this is and if they know when you should expect your grade.

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

The autumn exams are 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 the school or college where you were due to sit your summer exams if you want to sit your exams in the autumn.

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

No. You can choose to 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 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 assessment 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.

7.5 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 original 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.

7.6 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 take those exams can sit them in the autumn. 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.

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

You should speak to the college or university directly as they make their own

admission decisions. In many cases, students who sit these exams will be looking at starting their college or university studies in 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.

7.8 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 choose to take exams in the autumn. The school or college that enters you for the exams will be able to advise you.

7.9 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

7.10 Exam dates

AS & A levels
5 October to 23 October 2020

GCSEs
2 November to 23 November 2020

8. Where to find more support

8.1 Results, appeals, complaints and next steps

For higher and further 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.

8.2 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.

8.3 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 how to 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

8.4 Advice on issues relating to equalities

You can contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) for advice on discrimination claims under the Equality Act 2010. EASS advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights.

EASS

Telephone 0808 800 0082

Textphone 0808 800 0084

www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

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