

Part of
Education, universities and childcare during coronavirus



Guidance
Exam centre responsibility for students retaking qualifications from summer 2020

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1. Main points

Students taking exams to improve their summer 2020 grades

'Exam centres' in this guidance refers to:

- state-funded schools
- further education, sixth-form and specialist colleges
- apprenticeship providers who deliver functional skills qualification (FSQ) assessment in the workplace
- independent training providers
- adult and community learning providers
- independent schools
- private exam centres

In most cases, students entered for qualifications in the 2019/20 academic year used the grades they received in summer 2020 to move onto their next step.

There was also an opportunity for students to sit exams in autumn 2020, or at the first available opportunity in 2021, for:

- GCSEs
- AS/A levels
- some vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs)
- other general qualifications

In the rest of the document, we refer to these opportunities collectively (for mainly GQs in the autumn and VTQs in January and the spring) as autumn 2020, for purposes of ease of reference.

In cases where students were entered for an exam in summer 2020 but did not receive a grade or they wish to improve their summer 2020 grade (provided they did not enter for autumn exams in that subject or missed the autumn exams in that subject due to coronavirus (COVID-19) isolation or illness), we expect the exam centre that entered them in summer 2020 to provide them with the opportunity to receive a grade in 2021 at no additional cost.

Where an exam centre is unable to provide private candidates from summer 2020 with a teacher assessed grade in summer 2021 and did not enter the candidate in autumn 2020 exams or provide a centre assessed grade in summer 2020, we expect the exam centre to provide private candidates who have paid a fee with a refund of their summer 2020 fee.

2. Summer term 2021 qualification arrangements

Following the cancellation of 2019/20 academic year summer exams, students received their centre assessment grades, except where calculated grades were higher, in which case the calculated grades were awarded instead.

These summer 2020 grades were formal grades, with the same status as grades awarded in any other year, and the vast majority of students have been able to use them to move on to their next steps.

There was an [opportunity for students to sit exams in autumn 2020](#) and for some VTQs in the spring 2021 term. These exams acted as a backstop to the summer arrangements.

Students were able to sit them if, for example, they were unhappy with their summer grade, or if they needed an improved result to move onto the next stage of their education. The exams were also available to the group of students for whom there was not enough evidence for a grade to be awarded in the summer.

However, a small number of students who wanted to improve their grade will not have taken up the opportunity to sit the exams in autumn and will have planned to take exams in summer 2021 instead. For VTQ students, they may have wanted to improve their grade and the earliest opportunity to do so was from January 2021 onwards. Following the announcements on 5 January and 25 February 2021, these students should now have the opportunity to receive a grade in summer 2021 based on teacher assessment of a range of evidence.

This guidance sets out the Department for Education (DfE) expectations in relation to exam centres entering students for the qualifications in scope, and how the cost of fees will be covered.

Students entering for qualifications in summer term 2021

This guidance relates to all exam centres that are approved to deliver the following exams and assessments whether or not they are state funded:

- GCSEs
- AS and A levels
- VTQs, including FSQ

This guidance applies to students who meet all of the following:

- were entered for exams in summer 2020
- either did not receive a grade in summer 2020 or wish to resit exams to improve on their grade
- did not enter for autumn 2020 or spring term 2021 exams in a subject or were entered but were unable to attend any exams in that subject in that series because they were self-isolating due to COVID-19 exposure or illness

Students who partially meet these conditions (for example, students who did sit autumn exams) can still be entered for qualifications this summer, and exam centres may still choose to fund their entries at their discretion, but they cannot be included in exam centres' claims. This also applies if a student was entered for autumn 2020 exams in a subject, but missed all the exams in that subject for a reason other than COVID-19 self-isolation or illness. This is because the offer for reimbursement applies only to COVID-19 related disruption.

You should also refer to the [Awarding qualifications in summer 2021](#) guidance.

For those VTQs and FSQs in scope, exams officers should ensure they are familiar with relevant guidance published by the awarding organisations they are working with.

3. Responsibility for entering resitting students from summer 2020

For students who match the scope of this guidance, we expect the exam centre that entered them for a qualification in the 2020 summer series to enter them for that qualification in summer 2021, should the student wish them to do so. In the great majority of cases, the exam centre that the student attended will:

- know them
- have existing links with the relevant awarding organisation
- be aware of any reasonable adjustments that are needed

We expect exam centres to extend these arrangements to those students who:

- were private candidates in summer 2020
- were on their roll
- were not on roll but for who they had made, or intended to make, an exam entry

We expect the exam centre to provide private candidates with a refund for their summer 2020 fee, if this has not already happened, if the exam centre:

- is unable to provide a private candidate with a teacher assessed grade this year
- did not provide the private candidate with a centre assessed grade in summer 2020
- did not enter the private candidate for autumn 2020 or spring term 2021 exams in a subject, or the private candidate was unable to attend any exams in that subject in that series because they were self-isolating due to COVID-19 exposure or illness

We appreciate that there will be cases where students and exam centres will want to agree different local arrangements between themselves. This will often be sensible, for example where a student has moved and it is a better experience and more practical for them to enter for qualifications at the new institution. Where a different arrangement is made, we expect the original exam centre to refund the student any fees paid for the summer 2020 exam, where this has not already happened.

This does not apply where the student's new exam centre has been funded to support their resits, for example where the student is required to retake GCSE English or Maths as a condition of funding.

Where the student is working with a new exam centre, but the original exam centre may have some pre-existing evidence that could be used to inform the student's grade, the original exam centre is expected to cooperate with the new exam centre in line with JCQ guidance. Exam centres should read the [JCQ summer 2021 arrangements guidance](#) for more detail on the use of evidence from other exam centres and established educational providers.

4. Funding for students retaking qualifications from summer 2020

This guidance applies to students who:

- were entered for exams in summer 2020
- either did not receive a grade in summer 2020 or wish to resit exams to improve on their grade
- did not enter for autumn 2020 or spring term 2021 exams in a subject or were entered but were unable to attend any exams in that subject in that series because they were self-isolating due to COVID-19 exposure or illness

Students who partially meet these conditions (for example, students who did sit autumn exams, or students who missed autumn exams for reasons other than COVID-19 illness or self-isolation) cannot be included in exam centres claims.

We expect exam centres to pay fees for all students who are in the scope of this guidance, rather than passing the cost of the entry fee on to students or their families. Where a candidate paid for their qualification in summer 2020, they should not be charged again.

Qualifications in scope for reimbursement for DfE are all GCSE, AS, and A levels, and those VTQ and other general qualifications at level 1/2, level 2 and level 3, where students received exam centre assessment or calculated grades in summer 2020 and intended to resit as part of a scheduled assessment opportunity for the qualification in either the autumn 2020 or spring term 2021 series.

5. Responsibilities for paying fees

The awarding organisations are responsible for their own approach to charging fees for exams.

However, the government is clear that given the unique circumstances arising from summer 2020 awarding, students themselves and their families should not have to meet the cost of fees if they want to enter in summer 2021 to improve their summer 2020 grade and did not enter in autumn 2020, or missed the autumn exams due to COVID-19, self-isolation or illness.

We expect exam centres to pay fees for students in the scope of this guidance who are entering for qualifications, whether or not those students are on their roll.

Exam centres should not face additional costs for fees for such students, over and above what they would have paid had summer 2020 exams gone ahead.

DfE will provide funding for qualifications in scope, if it is needed, to ensure that exam centres do not incur a net loss, taking into account:

- their fees for exams in autumn 2020
- fees for qualifications in summer 2021
- any rebates or credit notes they receive in respect of summer 2020 exams together

We expect a very small number of students to be covered by this guidance and the summer 2020 rebates will cover the cost in almost all cases. Where this does not apply, exam centres will be able to request reimbursement from DfE. Further detail on the claims process will be made available in the summer.

This will also apply to fees incurred for entering students in the spring term 2021 to sit VTQs in scope, for which they received calculated or exam centre assessment results in summer 2020. This does not apply to FSQ assessment fees, as providers will cover these as usual via their Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding agreements.

DfE will not provide funding in relation to any administrative fees charged by exam centres, over and above the fees charged by the awarding organisations. We do not expect exam centres to charge administrative fees to students who were on their roll in summer 2020. Where private candidates in the scope of this guidance have already paid an administrative fee for summer 2020, we would not expect them to be charged twice.

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