



Open consultation

Part 4 – On-screen assessment in V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates

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Applies to England

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This part of the consultation sets out Ofqual's proposed approach to the use of on-screen assessment in V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates.

We are seeking views on how on-screen assessment should be regulated for these new qualifications, taking into account their proposed purposes, expected assessment design, delivery context, and the characteristics of the students who are likely to take them.

Background

Policy context

[The Curriculum and Assessment Review](#) (CAR) identified potential benefits from wider use of on-screen assessment, including opportunities to support accessibility and innovation. However, it also noted that the evidence base remains limited and wider use of on-screen assessment would have significant delivery implications for schools and colleges.

The [Secretary of State has said](#) any wider use of on-screen assessment must be:

- proportionate and fair for students
- manageable for schools and colleges to deliver with the staff, infrastructure and resources they have at present

Any transition to more on-screen assessment should also be introduced in a phased and controlled way.

Ofqual's recent consultation on on-screen assessment

Ofqual recently [consulted on its approach to regulating on-screen assessment](#) in GCSEs, AS and A Levels. That consultation proposed a controlled approach to support responsible innovation while protecting standards, fairness, public confidence, and secure and reliable delivery.

The proposals were shaped by 4 guiding principles:

- risks to standards, public confidence and fairness arising from on-screen assessment will be appropriately mitigated
- on-screen assessment maintains or enhances the quality of the assessment experience for students and centres

- on-screen assessment maintains or enhances accessibility for students with special educational needs and disabilities
- on-screen assessment platforms, awarding organisation arrangements and centre arrangements are demonstrably capable of supporting secure and reliable assessment delivery

The consultation asked how these principles might apply to vocational and technical qualifications. We are currently analysing responses and expect to publish our decisions later this year. Responses to this question have informed the proposed approach set out below.

Context for V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates

V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates are intended to have a distinct vocational focus, with an emphasis on applied learning and practical assessment. The nationally set subject content is intended to reflect the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to work in relevant sectors. However, achievement of these qualifications is not intended to signal full occupational competence, nor to indicate that students have mastered the generic digital skills needed for the workplace. Some elements of the subject content may nonetheless require the use of digital tools.

These new qualifications are intended to be taught in classroom-based settings and, in some cases, will be studied alongside GCSEs, AS and A Levels. Many existing vocational and technical qualifications already make use of on-screen assessment, often through on-demand delivery. A smaller number of qualifications use on-screen assessment in a sessional context, including some performance table qualifications (such as Key Stage 4 Technical Awards) and Technical Qualifications within T Levels.

The increased focus on consistency and comparability arising from the proposed reforms may lead to more timetabled assessment where students take assessments simultaneously on a date and time specified by the awarding organisation than has been typical for some existing vocational and technical qualifications, particularly at level 2. This may mean that similar issues relating to centre capacity and infrastructure for on-screen assessment, as identified in the context of GCSEs, AS and A Levels, may also arise for these qualifications.

Other forms of assessment, such as extended tasks, projects, and skills-based tasks will play a more substantial and central role within these qualifications than is typically the case for GCSEs, AS and A Levels. This can support more authentic assessment of applied learning and may provide opportunities for innovation at lower risk than timetabled assessments.

Although many awarding organisations have existing platforms for on-screen assessment, introducing on-screen assessment at an early stage in the delivery of these new qualifications could present risks if centres and awarding organisations have not yet had sufficient opportunity to build capacity.

In the context of GCSEs, AS and A Levels, Ofqual has proposed to manage some of these risks through a system-wide approach, including limits on the number of permitted on-screen specifications or restrictions in subjects with large national entry volumes. We do not consider this approach to be appropriate for V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates. This reflects that the implementation of these qualifications, including the number of qualifications to be introduced, the awarding organisations that will deliver them, and the likely size of the market, is still being finalised.

We expect these qualifications, particularly at level 2, are unlikely to have volumes comparable to large entry GCSE, AS or A Level subjects. For this reason, we are not proposing to manage the introduction of on-screen assessment by restricting its use in larger entry subjects.

The profile of students taking existing level 2 and level 3 vocational and technical qualifications differs from that of AS and A Level students, with a higher proportion from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and a slightly higher proportion with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This suggests that issues of digital inequality may also arise in the context of these new qualifications. While effective use of technology can improve curriculum delivery and reduce barriers for some students with SEND, it is important that any use of on-screen assessment is, and is seen to be, fair.

Our proposed approach to regulating on-screen assessment for these qualifications therefore seeks to take account of both the potential risks and the potential opportunities presented by on-screen assessment.

Proposed approach

In developing our proposed approach to on-screen assessment for V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates, we have considered the specific characteristics and contexts in which these qualifications will be delivered, and the intended cohort of students.

Against this background, we have sought to align, where appropriate, with the approach proposed for GCSEs, AS and A Levels.

Where on-screen assessment is permitted for V levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates, we propose that it will be subject to a consistent set of overarching expectations, including:

- the same 4 guiding principles for on-screen assessment consulted on for GCSEs, AS and A Levels (as detailed above)
- appropriate regulatory scrutiny, including accreditation and ongoing monitoring
- clear expectations relating to assessment platforms, digital devices and security, to support consistency, accessibility and secure delivery
- the availability of on-screen assessment as a reasonable adjustment where this is necessary and appropriate to meet specific accessibility needs of disabled students

This is intended to provide a coherent and proportionate regulatory approach across general and vocational qualifications, and to avoid unnecessary duplication or divergence in regulatory expectations. These expectations would apply wherever on-screen assessment is allowed, across V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates.

Proposal

Against the overarching approach set out above, this consultation seeks views on how the use of on-screen assessment should be permitted or restricted for new qualification types. We are seeking views on the following proposals.

V Levels – initial tranche (first teaching from 2027)

For the initial tranche of V Levels, we propose to take a cautious and carefully managed approach to the use of on-screen assessment for timetabled assessments taken simultaneously by students. Our proposed approach is:

- to allow the use of on-screen assessment in V Levels in digital systems and data

- not to allow the use of on-screen assessment in V Levels in accounting and finance or education

V Levels – future tranches

For future tranches of V Levels, our proposed approach is:

- to consider the use of on-screen assessment for timetabled assessments taken simultaneously by students on a subject-by-subject basis for future V Levels, in line with the guiding principles and approach consulted on for GCSEs, AS and A Levels
- for this to be informed by evidence from the delivery of the initial tranche of V Levels, wider system readiness, and stakeholder feedback

Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates

For Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates in the first and subsequent tranches:

- to allow the use of on-screen assessment in Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates

Rationale

V Levels

V Levels are intended to support progression to higher education as well as to higher technical training or an apprenticeship. It is therefore vital students can complete their qualifications without disruption and to the same timescales as students taking A Levels. This is particularly important in the early years of delivery, as public confidence in the new qualifications is being established.

For the initial tranche of V Levels, we propose a cautious and carefully managed approach to the use of on-screen assessment for timetabled assessments taken simultaneously by students, allowing its use only for digital systems and data V Levels at this stage. Having reviewed the subject content, we consider that in digital systems and data V Levels a case can be made that on-screen assessment could support valid assessment of the intended constructs and, in some cases, help mitigate risks to the authenticity of student work in other assessment.

Where awarding organisations choose to offer both paper-based and on-screen modes of digital systems and data V Levels, we do not propose to require

them to develop separate specifications or substantially different questions for each mode. This reflects the fact that these are new qualifications without existing paper-based specifications, and that entry volumes are expected to be relatively small. Requiring parallel specifications or significantly different questions would therefore be disproportionate and could create unnecessary barriers to delivery. This differs from the approach proposed for GCSEs, AS and A Levels, and reflects the different context and scale of these new qualifications.

We do not propose to allow the use of on-screen assessment for timetabled assessments taken simultaneously by students in other V Levels in the initial tranche. We will, however, allow the use of on-screen assessment for other assessments in all V Levels. This reflects the central role of centre-marked assessment in these qualifications and provides scope for appropriate innovation in the assessment of applied learning.

This is an initial position for the first tranche of V Levels. As further V Levels are introduced, and as evidence emerges from the delivery of the initial tranche, we expect to refine our approach to the regulation of on-screen assessment. This will include considering a wider range of subjects and drawing on engagement with awarding organisations, schools and colleges, informed by their experience of delivering the first tranche, to support the development of a longer-term approach.

Question 43

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to the regulation of on-screen assessment in tranche 1?

Question 44

Do you have any comments to inform the development of our longer-term approach for the regulation of on-screen assessment in V Levels?

Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates

Our proposed approach to the use of on-screen assessment for Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates seeks to ensure that students are not adversely affected by risks such as limited centre capacity, digital inequality, or insufficient awarding organisation readiness.

However, we consider that these risks are mitigated in this context by a number

of factors. These include the likely smaller cohorts for these qualifications, the more established use of on-screen assessment within vocational and technical qualifications, and the greater flexibility we propose to permit in relation to the timing of assessment. We do not therefore propose to place any restrictions on the use of on-screen assessment for timetabled assessments taken simultaneously by students for these qualifications.

Where awarding organisations choose to offer both paper-based and on-screen modes, we do not propose to require separate specifications or substantially different questions for each mode. This reflects the same considerations as set out above for digital systems and data V Levels, including that these are new qualifications without existing paper-based specifications and that entry volumes are expected to be relatively small. Requiring parallel specifications would therefore be disproportionate and could create unnecessary barriers to delivery.

Question 45

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to the regulation of on-screen assessment for Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates?

Next steps for the regulation of on-screen assessment

At this stage, we are seeking views on our policy proposals only. We intend to consult on the draft regulations to implement our final policy positions for on-screen assessment in tranche 1 V Levels and in Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates in the autumn, alongside draft regulations for GCSEs, AS and A Levels. We also plan to consult on our longer-term regulatory approach for V Levels in due course.

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