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Open consultation

# Annex B – Proposed Conditions, requirements and guidance for Foundation Certificates

Published 23 April 2026

## Applies to England

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# Foundation Certificate Qualification Level Conditions, requirements and guidance

## Introduction

### About this document

This document is part of a suite of documents which sets out our regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering Foundation Certificates.

These conditions and requirements come into effect at [time of publication] on [day and date of publications].

This document sets out the following rules:

- our Qualification Level Conditions for Foundation Certificates, which we have set using our powers under [section 134 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#), and
- our requirements in relation to Foundation Certificate assessment strategies, qualification purposes, assessments, grading, and standard setting.

With respect to all Foundation Certificates, awarding organisations must also comply with:

- our [General Conditions of Recognition](#), which apply to all awarding organisations and qualifications, and
- all relevant [Regulatory Documents](#).

Ofqual also sets out guidance in relation to Foundation Certificate assessments, which is designed to help awarding organisations comply with (a) the Qualification

Level Conditions and requirements and (b) the General Conditions of Recognition.

# **Condition FC1: Interpretation and Definitions**

## **FC1.1**

The rules of interpretation and definitions outlined in General Condition J1 shall apply to the Foundation Certificate Qualification Level Conditions.

## **FC1.2**

Except in the circumstances described in Condition FC1.3, the requirements imposed by Foundation Certificate Qualification Level Conditions apply in addition to the requirements imposed by the General Conditions of Recognition.

## **FC1.3**

To the extent that there is any inconsistency between –

(a) a requirement of a Foundation Certificate Qualification Level Condition and an awarding organisation's ability to provide either a particular type of Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration, such that the awarding organisation is prevented from providing that Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration, the awarding organisation may provide that Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration and is not obliged to comply with the requirement of the Foundation Certificate Qualification Level Condition,

(b) in all other cases a requirement of a Foundation Certificate Qualification Level Condition and a requirement of a General Condition of Recognition, such that an awarding organisation could not comply with both such requirements, the awarding organisation must comply with the requirement of the Foundation Certificate

Qualification Level Condition and is not obliged to comply with the requirement of the General Condition of Recognition.

## **FC1.4**

In these Conditions, the following words shall have the meaning given to them below (and cognate expressions should be construed accordingly) –

### **Assessment by Examination**

An assessment which is –

(a) set by an awarding organisation,

(b) designed to be taken simultaneously by all relevant Learners at a time determined by the awarding organisation, and

(c) taken under conditions specified by the awarding organisation (including conditions relating to the supervision of Learners during the assessment and the duration of the assessment).

### **Non-exam Assessment**

An assessment which is not an Assessment by Examination.

### **Foundation Certificate**

A qualification that has been accredited by Ofqual as a Foundation Certificate under section 139 of the Act.

### **Foundation Certificate Qualification Level Condition**

A Condition of Recognition that applies to a Foundation Certificate and which uses the numbering format 'FCn.n', where 'n' denotes a number.

## **Condition FC2: Disapplication of certain General Conditions of Recognition applying to Foundation Certificates**

## **FC2.1**

In respect of each Foundation Certificate which it makes available, or proposes to make available, the following General Conditions of Recognition do not apply –

- (a) Condition E1.1,
- (b) Condition E1.2, and
- (c) Condition E7.

## **Condition FC3: Assessment strategies**

### **FC3.1**

In respect of each Foundation Certificate which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) establish and maintain an assessment strategy for that qualification,
- (b) ensure that the assessment strategy complies with any requirements which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, and
- (c) have regard to any guidance in relation to assessment strategies which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

### **FC3.2**

In particular, an awarding organisation must ensure that the assessment strategy for a Foundation Certificate sets out how the awarding organisation intends to secure, on an ongoing basis, compliance with its Conditions of Recognition in respect of the assessments for that qualification.

### **FC3.3**

An awarding organisation must ensure that all assessments for a Foundation Certificate which it makes available, or proposes to make available, are designed, set, delivered and marked in compliance with its assessment strategy for that qualification.

### **FC3.4**

An awarding organisation must –

- (a) keep under review its assessment strategy for a Foundation Certificate, and revise it where necessary, so as to satisfy itself that the assessment strategy meets at all times the requirements of Conditions FC3.1 and FC3.2,
- (b) review its assessment strategy for a Foundation Certificate promptly upon receiving a request from Ofqual to do so, and subsequently ensure that its assessment strategy complies with any requirements that Ofqual has communicated to it in writing, and
- (c) promptly notify Ofqual of any revisions made by it to any assessment strategy.

### **FC3.5**

An awarding organisation must –

- (a) upon receiving a request from Ofqual to do so, demonstrate to Ofqual's satisfaction that it has complied with its assessment strategy for a Foundation Certificate in respect of any particular assessment for that qualification, or provide an explanation to Ofqual as to why it has not so complied, and
- (b) give effect to any recommendation that Ofqual may make in respect of its compliance with its assessment strategy.

## **Condition FC4: Purposes**

## **FC4.1**

An awarding organisation must ensure that each Foundation Certificate which it makes available, or proposes to make available –

(a) meets the general purposes for such qualifications published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, having regard to any guidance which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, and

(b) has one or more specific purposes which are consistent with the general purposes.

## **FC4.2**

An awarding organisation must ensure that each Foundation Certificate which it makes available, or proposes to make available, is designed so as, where there is a conflict between two or more general purposes such that compliance with one general purpose will reduce the degree to which an awarding organisation can comply with another –

(a) priority is given to the general purposes in accordance with their hierarchy, with the greatest priority being given to compliance with purposes further up the hierarchy, and

(b) without prejudice to Condition FC4.2(a), compliance is secured with all of the general purposes to the greatest extent possible.

# **Condition FC5: Total Qualification Time**

## **FC5.1**

In respect of each Foundation Certificate that it makes available or proposes to

make available, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) design that qualification such that the number of hours for Guided Learning will be in line with any requirements set by the Secretary of State,
- (b) assign to that qualification that number hours of Guided Learning, and
- (c) assign to that qualification a number of hours for Total Qualification Time by applying the Total Qualification Time Criteria.

## **Condition FC6: Content**

### **FC6.1**

In respect of each Foundation Certificate which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) comply with the requirements relating to that qualification set out in the relevant document published by the Secretary of State and specified in the list published by Ofqual and revised from time to time,
- (b) have regard to any recommendations or guidelines relating to that qualification set out in that document, and
- (c) interpret that document in accordance with any requirements, and having regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

## **Condition FC7: Assessment**

### **FC7.1**

An awarding organisation must ensure that in respect of each assessment for a

Foundation Certificate which it makes available, or proposes to make available, it complies with any requirements, and has regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

## **Condition FC8: Standard setting**

### **FC8.1**

An awarding organisation must ensure that the specification for each Foundation Certificate which it makes available, or proposes to make available, sets out the specified levels of attainment which comply with any requirements which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

### **FC8.2**

In respect of each Foundation Certificate that it makes available, an awarding organisation must comply with any requirements, and have regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time in relation to –

(a) the promotion of consistency between the measurement of Learners' levels of attainment in that qualification and similar qualifications made available by other awarding organisations, and

(b) the setting of specified levels of attainment.

### **FC8.3**

In setting the specified levels of attainment for a Foundation Certificate which it makes available, an awarding organisation must have regard to an appropriate range of qualitative and quantitative evidence.

## **FC8.4**

An awarding organisation must maintain a record of –

- (a) the evidence to which it has had regard in setting the specified levels of attainment for each Foundation Certificate which it makes available, and
- (b) its rationale for the selection of and weight given to that evidence.

## **Assessment strategy requirements**

Condition FC3.1(a) requires an awarding organisation to establish and maintain an assessment strategy for each Foundation Certificate which it makes available or proposes to make available. Condition FC3.2 requires an awarding organisation to ensure that the assessment strategy for a Foundation Certificate sets out how the awarding organisation intends to secure, on an ongoing basis, compliance with its Conditions of Recognition in respect of the assessments for that qualification.

Condition FC3.4 requires an awarding organisation to keep its assessment strategy under review, and to promptly notify Ofqual of any revisions made to it. An assessment strategy should be treated as a live working document which should be updated as necessary, considering evidence from assessment development, delivery and monitoring, so qualifications and assessments continue to be fit for purpose.

Condition FC3.1(b) requires an awarding organisation to comply with any requirements in relation to assessment strategies published by Ofqual.

We set out our requirements for the purposes of Condition FC3.1(b) below.

## **General requirements**

An assessment strategy for a Foundation Certificate must provide a comprehensive picture of the steps and approach an awarding organisation will take to secure compliance with its Conditions of Recognition in relation to the design, delivery and marking of assessments for, and the award of, that qualification.

An assessment strategy must clearly set out how an awarding organisation will ensure its Foundation Certificate is fit for purpose in line with Condition D1.1. In doing so, the strategy must:

- provide a clear and well-structured explanation of the overall approach
- explain the rationale behind key design and delivery decisions, supported by relevant evidence or examples where appropriate
- explain the risks and trade-offs in the approach and the mitigations for those risks

An assessment strategy must explain how an awarding organisation will ensure that the qualification, and the assessments for it, are fit for purpose. In particular, it must include information and evidence to show how an awarding organisation promotes and acts on feedback between the different stages of the qualification lifecycle to keep its approach under continuous review, making improvements where appropriate, to ensure the assessments for the qualification continue to be high-quality and fit for purpose.

### **Assessment strategy structure**

It is up to an awarding organisation to decide how to structure its assessment strategy. The assessment strategy is a live document that must be used and updated throughout the lifetime of the qualification. An awarding organisation should structure it in a way that supports this.

In doing this an awarding organisation may, for example, choose to develop separate parts of its assessment strategy that:

- are generic to a qualification type or to all of its qualifications (for example, all of its Foundation Certificates)
- are specific to an individual qualification (for example, a Foundation Certificate in a particular subject)

The separate parts of the assessment strategy could be presented as separate documents, or as a main document with annexes. An awarding organisation should explain clearly how any separate parts of an assessment strategy relate to each other. It should also explain how each of these separate parts will be kept under review, and revised where necessary, in light of the others. Taken together, such parts should form a coherent and integrated whole.

## **Detailed requirements**

We set out below our detailed requirements on the specific information and evidence an awarding organisation must include in its assessment strategy. The amount of information and evidence that can be included may vary across the areas identified, depending on the relevant point in the qualification's lifecycle to which a particular area pertains and the extent to which Ofqual has determined the regulatory approach in relation to a particular issue.

These detailed requirements are intended to indicate the minimum information that an assessment strategy must include. They are not intended to provide a template specifying the form that it must take, since the optimal structure and content of an assessment strategy will depend on the approach that is being proposed by an awarding organisation.

These requirements are divided into 2 sections. Each of these is further divided into subsections which follow, broadly, the key phases of the qualification lifecycle. There is also a specific scheme of assessment section in the individual qualification section.

- Information that is applicable in general to a suite or qualification type:
  - Qualification development
  - Assessment development
  - Qualification and assessment delivery
  - Qualification and assessment monitoring
- Information that is applicable to a specific individual qualification:
  - Qualification design
  - Assessment design
  - Qualification and assessment delivery
  - Qualification and assessment monitoring
  - Scheme of Assessment

Assessment strategies should give examples, as appropriate, to support any points or arguments made within the document (for example, questions, tasks and mark schemes). Assessment strategies should also refer, as appropriate, to existing policies or procedures to support an awarding organisation in demonstrating how it will seek to ensure that the qualification meets the requirements in the Conditions in relation to assessments (for example, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policies).

# General to a suite or qualification type

## Qualification development

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation complies with relevant Conditions of Recognition and statutory requirements when developing qualifications. This should include a description of how an awarding organisation engages with appropriate Users and how it uses evidence gathered from Users, such as employers, higher education institutions and schools and colleges, when it develops qualifications.

## Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?

It is important for an awarding organisation to show how it has considered views from Users of the qualifications in ensuring that they can meet their intended purposes.

## Assessment development

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation's approach to developing assessments for qualifications ensures that it meets its regulatory requirements, including:

- the principles an awarding organisation uses to underpin the development of Valid assessments
- how an awarding organisation has considered the 'Guidance for designing and developing accessible assessments' in the development of their assessments

Describes the systems and process in place to support development of assessments, including:

- the different stages and personnel involved
- the approach to training individuals who will be responsible for setting assessments, including ensuring security and mitigating any Conflicts of Interest
- how an awarding organisation ensures that assessment developers have the assessment expertise required to design questions or tasks and mark schemes that will promote Validity and Reliability
- how an awarding organisation specifies and commissions questions or tasks and mark schemes
- whether and how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is used for developing assessments
- how an awarding organisation quality assures or controls question or task and mark scheme development

- how assessments are quality assured and reviewed before being taken by Learners
- how an awarding organisation engages with a suitable range of equality groups and minimises unintended bias
- where appropriate, details of how employer representatives have been engaged in the development process

Demonstrates how, when producing Assessments by Examination, an awarding organisation ensures that it meets regulatory requirements, such as weightings for Assessment by Examination and coverage of subject content.

Demonstrates how any Non-exam Assessment tasks are set and undertaken to ensure the requirements within and across Centres are consistent and that the subject content is appropriately targeted.

Explains how an awarding organisation ensures that there are no significant overlaps between assessments and any course materials or guidance that it has produced or endorsed.

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation has considered the Manageability of assessments for Centres. This should include a description of the factors that impact on the Manageability of the assessments for Centres and how those have been considered.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

The design of Assessments by Examination must be justified in relation to their:

- alignment with the purposes of the qualification
- effectiveness in assessing the knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the content
- conduciveness to achieving Reliable outcomes for Learners

It is important that an awarding organisation demonstrates how the Non-exam Assessment maximises assessment Validity and what the key threats to Reliability and Validity are, and how these have been mitigated. In particular, how the awarding organisation has considered any threat posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the steps taken to prevent the occurrence of malpractice involving AI.

### **Qualification and assessment delivery Marking/assessing performance**

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation promotes accurate and consistent marking by giving details of standardisation procedures and any wider training for examiners/Assessors and explaining their effectiveness.

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation promotes accurate and consistent marking by giving details of:

- how marking processes will operate, including who carries out the marking, i.e. the awarding organisation and/or Centres, any different systems used (and the role of automated marking systems and Artificial Intelligence (for quality assurance) if applicable
- any variation between assessments in relation to these processes
- any principles used to guide the selection of marking systems for assessments with different properties, for example different question types
- processes to monitor marking quality (and issuing of results) and take remedial action where necessary

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation promotes consistency of standards within and across Centres through its Moderation of Non-exam Assessments by giving details of:

- its sampling regime, including sample sizes, tolerances and any evidence which shows the robustness of its approach
- how it determines and applies any adjustments to Centre-marked assessments

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation promotes effective Centre marking of Non-exam Assessments to ensure they discriminate effectively between Learners by giving details of the approach to guidance and training for Centres, including the nature and frequency of training opportunities and whether these are mandatory or optional.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

An awarding organisation must justify its approach to marking, monitoring and Moderation in relation to the qualification purposes and the need for accurate and Reliable outcomes.

An awarding organisation must describe its approach to training and standardising Assessors (both external Assessors and Centre Assessors). This could include, for example, any specific training for new or senior Assessors, as well as any wider training available. An awarding organisation must describe its standardisation

procedures, including, for example, how it will determine whether an Assessor can assess reliably.

### **Administering assessments**

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation effectively administers assessments by giving details of:

- how it ensures the secure transmission, distribution and storage (including by Centres) of materials
- how it has considered Centre and system capacity and ensures Centre readiness where on-screen assessments are used
- how it ensures the proper conduct of assessments by Centres, including where Learners are permitted to have access to assessment materials before assessments are taken
- how it will minimise the opportunities for and address any malpractice or maladministration by Centres

For assessments which may be adapted by Centres details of:

- the extent to which Centres will be permitted, or required, to adapt assessments set by an awarding organisation
- monitoring that is in place to ensure that the awarding organisation has visibility of any modifications and their appropriateness and when checks take place, i.e. before or after assessments have been taken
- the support offered to ensure these assessments are Valid and fit for purpose
- how an awarding organisation will manage their responsibilities under equalities law

Details of the approach to guidance and training for Centres around adapting assessments, including the nature and frequency of training opportunities and whether these are mandatory or optional.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

Inadequate approaches to security can undermine Reliability – if, for example, assessment scores do not accurately reflect Learners' attainment.

It is important that an awarding organisation ensures that it demonstrates its approach for all modes of assessment, including for any on-screen assessments that might be provided to Centres and taken by Learners electronically so that

particular risks, including technical failure, are appropriately managed and mitigated.

It is important that an awarding organisation details any specific risks considered about the level of responsibility delegated to Centres in quality assuring adaptations to assessments.

### **Standard setting and maintenance**

- Demonstrates how an awarding organisation sets and maintains appropriate grading<sup>[footnote 1]</sup> standards in line with the prescribed regulatory approach and promotes Comparability between awarding organisations and over time by giving details of:
  - the technical methodology employed in the standards setting process, including the personnel roles involved
  - the range of qualitative and quantitative evidence used to inform standards setting and maintenance and the weight given to different evidence
  - how the approach may be adjusted, including any variation between initial standard setting and maintenance of standards

Demonstrates how decisions from the standards setting and maintenance process are subject to appropriate internal scrutiny and governance within an awarding organisation, including details of the personnel roles involved in this process.

Demonstrates how decisions in relation to standards setting and maintenance promote Comparability, over time and between awarding organisations, and are kept under review by giving details of:

- how Comparability between different versions of assessments and different modes of assessment (i.e. on-screen versus paper-based) is ensured, both where these are available at the same time and on an ongoing basis
- how evidence generated in line with any requirements set by Ofqual in relation to inter-awarding organisation Comparability will be used to inform decisions on standard setting

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

It is important the approach to standard setting and maintenance follows an appropriate technical methodology. An awarding organisation must set out the technical methodology for determining unit/Component and qualification level grade boundaries.

An awarding organisation must justify its approach to effectively setting and

maintaining appropriate grading standards within the qualification, both over time and with similar qualifications it makes available. Where possible, an awarding organisation must also demonstrate how it will effectively set and maintain standards with similar qualifications offered by other awarding organisations.

It is important the approach to standard setting and maintaining:

- includes full consideration of the strengths and limitations of the different types of available evidence, and the weight given to different evidence
- leads to securing fair and Reliable outcomes over time and between Learners

It is important to ensure that standards are maintained when there are multiple modes of assessment.

An awarding organisation must describe how it ensures Comparability between different modes of assessment, for example when assessments are set, marked and assessed, including any separate awarding processes.

### **Attainment and Reporting**

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation aggregates results for individual assessment Components in line with regulatory requirements and in a manner that is technically sound.

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation will issue results in a timely fashion and that are clear for users of the qualifications. This should include details of its approach to publishing expected dates and timescales for the issue of results.

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation deals with Reviews of Marking, Moderation and Appeals (RoMMA) to ensure that concerns over the accuracy of marking and/or Moderation are addressed adequately and appropriately by giving details of:

- how they are investigated fairly, thoroughly and in a timely fashion, and the associated fees
- how justified concerns over inaccuracy are resolved by following an appropriate process

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

The approach must be justified in relation to the content and purposes of the qualification.

An appropriate aggregation method is needed to ensure appropriate discrimination between Learners, so their overall qualification result fairly and Validly reflects their performance at Component level.

An appropriate process is fundamental to ensuring that appropriate inferences are drawn from results.

### **Qualification and assessment monitoring**

Details of the data that will be collected to monitor the delivery and ongoing performance of the qualification.

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation ensures that any qualification or Component-level data that may be required by Ofqual can be provided within a reasonable time, including details of the systems and procedures in place to support this.

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation monitors how assessments function as a whole by giving details of:

- how it collects metrics to monitor how well the assessments function, such as Component-to-subject correlation
- how it uses these metrics to monitor or support assessment design and support Validity

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation monitors how individual assessments function by giving details of:

- how it collects metrics to be used to monitor how individual assessments function, such as: spread of marks; grade boundary position; and correlation of assessment Component marks with other measures of performance
- how it uses these metrics to monitor or support assessment design and support Validity

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation monitors how questions or tasks function by giving details of:

- the metrics it collects, such as facility indices, discrimination indices and performance for different subgroups of the entry in terms of performance
- how it uses these metrics to monitor or support assessment design and support Validity.

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation monitors Reliability and accuracy of

grading classification by giving details of:

- how it collects metrics, such as Reliability coefficients and grading classification accuracy statistics, estimated at Component and subject level where the assessment framework permits
- how it uses these metrics to monitor or support assessment design and support Validity

Describes techniques and measures used to monitor and risk assess key aspects of the qualification that may affect its Validity, for example:

- security or malpractice issues or incidents, including those related to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- feedback through engagement with Users of the qualification
- how an awarding organisation assesses whether any aspect of the qualification may be disadvantaging a group of Learners who share a Characteristic

Demonstrates how an awarding organisation feeds monitoring outcomes back into qualification and assessment development by giving details of:

- the processes through which it monitors the key aspects including the quality of assessments, susceptibility to malpractice and maladministration and standard setting and maintenance processes
- how the assessment approach is kept under review and, where applicable, refined over time, based on evidence of its effectiveness
- the sources of evidence and feedback included when reviewing the effectiveness of a qualification

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

It is important to have appropriate processes in place to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the qualification, using data at relevant points in qualification development, to maintain its ongoing Validity.

Failure to consider the ongoing Validity of the qualification increases the likelihood of threats manifesting themselves and/or assessment processes ceasing to remain fit for purpose.

# Specific to an individual qualification

## Qualification design

### Purposes

Demonstrates how the qualification fulfils the general purposes specified under Condition FC4.

Details the specific purposes of the qualification and demonstrates how it fulfils those purposes.

Details of any competing purposes, what trade-offs have been considered and how these have been resolved.

### Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?

A clear purpose will ensure that Users of the qualification are not misled.

Considering the relative importance of the purposes in terms of the intended priority order set out in Condition FC4 is likely to aid an effective qualification design process by informing the range of trade-offs required when making design decisions.

### Subject requirements and approach

Demonstrates that the qualification covers the required subject content and types of assessment which must comprise specific proportions of Assessment by Examination and Non-exam Assessment.

Includes a mapping grid of specification content against subject content.

Demonstrates that the qualification supports any subject aims and objectives for the course of study.

Describes the approach to amplification of the subject content, where required, and how it ensures that this is appropriately demanding for the qualification, and consistent with the qualification size.

Includes a rationale for any optional routes through the qualification, including details of any optional content and, where applicable, the difference between specifications offered in the same subject, and explains how such optional routes will be comparable in terms of the Level of Demand and the amount of subject content

required to be taught and on which Learners will be assessed.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

Poorly defined qualification content can lead to:

- Learners being insufficiently prepared for assessments
- the development of assessments and assessment criteria or mark schemes that fail to appropriately target
- the qualification failing to meet one or more of its general or specific purposes

It is important for an awarding organisation to provide clear, coherent and consistent mapping or tracking grids to show how the subject content has been covered in the qualification. If there are multiple grids, then it will be important to understand if/how they interrelate and that they portray the information in a clear and consistent way, for example, the level of granularity in the mapping between documents.

The presence of optional routes may have implications for content coverage (for example, where one or more routes may omit key elements of the content).

Where optional routes are included, the awarding organisation must explain its rationale for including them and how it has determined the content for each optional route. This may include justification as to how different routes represent a comparable Level of Demand and volume.

An awarding organisation must explain how it has determined the content for each optional route.

### **Demand**

Details of the steps taken to ensure that the Level of Demand of the qualification content is set appropriately.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

An awarding organisation must demonstrate that it has considered the Level of Demand of the qualification in relation to the target group(s) and, where appropriate, to other qualifications at the same level.

### **Progression**

Identifies qualifications from and to which Learners will be likely to progress and explains how this is supported.

Demonstrates that Users support the qualification.

Provides feedback from Users about the qualification.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

It is important for an awarding organisation to demonstrate that the qualification can support the intended progression routes.

#### **Assessment design**

##### **Assessment times**

Includes total assessment time, and a rationale for this.

Includes individual assessment time for each Component, and a rationale for these, including how the time allowed is sufficient for Learners to complete the assessments.

Where more than one assessment is used in a Component, includes the assessment time for each assessment, and a rationale for these.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

An awarding organisation must justify how the total assessment time and individual assessment time for each assessment is appropriate in terms of covering the required subject content effectively, supporting Validity and balancing Reliability and Manageability.

#### **Assessment structure and type**

Details of how assessments will be structured and a rationale for the approach, for example in terms of covering the required subject content effectively, supporting Validity, and balancing Reliability and Manageability.

For example:

- number of assessments.
- number of tasks or questions in an assessment
- number of sections in an assessment.
- number of assessments in a Component
- relative weightings of assessments
- approach to differentiating for the available grade range

- how different elements of the content are targeted by the different assessments
- rationale for determining the method/s of assessment (for example a written or practical examination)
- balance between the method/s of assessment
- consideration of Characteristics
- consideration of the range of Reasonable Adjustments that might be required and would be appropriate for the qualification
- that the specific modes of assessment to be used are appropriate to the construct being measured and comply with regulatory requirements

Explains how the approach to the assessments overall has considered and mitigated any risks of negative impact on teaching and learning.

Determines the level of adaptability of any sample assessments (for example assignment briefs), and a rationale for this.

Demonstrates that where the same assessments are used over time, how risks relating to predictability and malpractice are managed.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

An awarding organisation must justify how the key structural aspects of the assessment have been designed to be:

- consistent with the purposes of the qualification
- appropriate in relation to the content
- conducive to the development of robust standard setting and standards maintenance processes

It is important to demonstrate how Comparability is assured in relation to any Centre adaptation (or similar) of assessments set by the awarding organisation.

### **Optional assessment**

Where applicable, includes details of any elements of the assessments that are optional.

Where applicable, explains how Comparability of optional routes will be appropriately ensured.

Where appropriate, explains how the approach to optional elements in the

assessments has considered and mitigated any risks of negative impact on teaching and learning.

Where appropriate, explains how any risks of Centres and students navigating optionality incorrectly will be addressed.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

It is important to ensure that standards are maintained when there are optional routes.

### **Number of marks**

Where the assessments are numerically marked, includes the number of marks for each individual Component, and a rationale for those numbers of marks.

Where the assessments are numerically marked, explains how the number of marks supports differentiation for the available grade range.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

An awarding organisation must justify how the number of marks for each individual assessment is appropriate in terms of covering the required subject content effectively, supporting Validity and balancing Reliability and Manageability.

### **Generating outcomes and assessment and qualification level**

Explains the approach to generating outcomes for individual assessments, including how Learners' attainment for each Component is determined, and aggregated to reflect Learners' attainment in the qualification as a whole. This should include, as appropriate, reference to mark-based assessments and/or directly-graded assessments.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

It is important to ensure that the approach to generating outcomes:

- is in line with the purposes of the qualification and the aspects of the content that it is assessing
- discriminates effectively between Learners of different abilities
- enables awarding organisations to monitor and control standards

### **Coverage of subject content**

Explains the approach to coverage of the subject content, including:

- coverage of the content, overall and in each assessment
- sampling of the content
- approach to coverage of content over time, including over what period the full subject content will be sampled and how this is tracked and monitored
- how the risk of predictability will be minimised
- how the Level of Demand will be set and maintained
- how Learners' interests will be protected if there are changes to content

Demonstrates that the division of subject content across assessment Components supports Valid assessment and adheres to any regulatory requirements.

Demonstrates how the questions or tasks in a single assessment and over a number of consecutive assessment series will represent a sufficient sampling of the subject content.

Demonstrates the subject content structure across assessment Components is logical and coherent. This should include how the division of subject content across Components supports synoptic assessment where required.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

A sampling methodology must demonstrate adequate coverage of the full range of content both over time and in relation to individual assessments.

It is important for an awarding organisation to provide clear, coherent and consistent mapping or tracking grids to show how the subject content has been covered in the assessments. If there are multiple grids, then it will be important to understand if/how they interrelate and that they portray the information in a clear and consistent way, for example, the level of granularity in the mapping between documents.

### **Question/task types and mark schemes**

Includes for each assessment:

- an explanation of the range and balance of question or task types to be used (for example multiple-choice, short answer, extended response, practical observation) and how these will credit the full range of target Learners and promote effective discrimination between them to support Valid assessment of the subject content
- the principles by which the mark scheme for each question or task has been developed, including their correlation to question or task requirements, their suitability to credit the full range of target Learners and promote effective

discrimination between them and, how they are utilised to ensure the Reliability of judgements

- how the questions or tasks and mark schemes used will promote (as far as possible, bearing in mind Validity requirements) the Reliability of marking, including accuracy and consistency
- how the questions or tasks in a single assessment and over a number of consecutive assessment series will mitigate predictability, such as in terms of what they target, how they are expressed and any associated Stimulus Materials

Provides as part of its assessment strategy examples of questions/tasks and associated mark schemes, representing the range to be used in assessments, with commentaries explaining the approaches and illustrating how questions/tasks and mark schemes will be constructed in assessments. These examples may or may not be drawn from any related sample assessment materials.

Where applicable, demonstrates that the criteria used in directly graded assessments are clearly articulated, aligned to the qualification content, appropriate for the qualification level, and can be reliably interpreted by assessors.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

Poorly designed assessments could impact on their ability to elicit Reliable information regarding the proficiency of Learners.

### **Question and task Validity**

Details of the steps taken to ensure that questions/tasks elicit the assessment evidence they ought to elicit and provides evidence relating to their intended Validity, including how they are designed to target their intended demands and intended level of difficulty, as well as promote accessibility and Minimising Bias. For example, how an awarding organisation ensures that:

- each question or task elicits its intended learning outcomes
- Learners understand what each question or task is asking them to do
- bias and other construct irrelevant factors are minimised
- Learners have sufficient time to complete questions or tasks
- the intended level of difficulty is appropriate and how this has been established
- accessibility has been promoted
- Minimising Bias has been achieved

## **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

Poorly designed assessments could impact on their ability to elicit Reliable information regarding the proficiency of Learners.

### **Availability of assessments**

Details the approach to availability of assessments, including:

- number of assessments to be available (for example in an academic year and/or if available in different modes)
- scheduling of assessment series in each academic year
- approach to Learners retaking assessments

Explains how its approach is appropriate, including consideration of:

- the amount and weight of material to be covered.
- the extent to which different aspects would be covered sequentially or concurrently
- the need to ensure that enough time is available for sufficient learning to have taken place
- how the approach will support standard setting

## **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

An awarding organisation must:

- justify its approach in relation to the purpose of the assessment.
- detail specific risks that have been identified (such as to the Comparability, predictability and security of assessments), and how these have been mitigated.

### **Controls on taking assessments**

Details of the controls to be in place for taking assessments, including:

- specified Learner access to assessment materials before the assessment is taken
- specified time limits.
- support permitted during assessment
- resources permitted during assessment (for example own notes, open-book, internet, Artificial Intelligence)

- supervision/Invigilation
- permitted collaboration
- the approach to authenticating work

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

It is important that any controls have been fully considered and specified to ensure assessments are Valid, Reliable and appropriate for the qualification purpose.

### **Qualification and assessment delivery**

#### **Attainment and reporting**

Details of how the assessments generate Reliable information in line with the proposed grading.

Details of:

- the characteristics that differentiate Learners who have demonstrated different levels of attainment
- the steps that have been taken to ensure that there is sufficient difference between adjacent levels of attainment

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

The characteristics of the specified levels of attainment must follow clearly from relevant elements of the content.

An awarding organisation's approach to differentiating between adjacent levels of attainment must be justified in terms of the scope to generate Reliable information.

#### **Any further evidence**

Presents any further evidence of processes and procedures that are specifically relevant to this qualification rather than common across qualifications and an explanation as to how these are necessary in context of the specific qualification.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

It is important for an awarding organisation to set out any information and evidence that is specific to an individual qualification to show why a specific approach is needed in certain contexts.

#### **Qualification and assessment monitoring**

Includes any further evidence of processes and procedures that are specifically

relevant to this qualification rather than common across qualifications and explanation as to how these are necessary in context of the specific qualification.

### **Why is this important and what must an awarding organisation include in its assessment strategy?**

It is important for an awarding organisation to set out any information and evidence that is specific to an individual qualification to show why a specific approach is needed in certain contexts.

## **Scheme of Assessment**

The purpose of the scheme of assessment is for the awarding organisation to set out key information about the qualification and the design of the assessments within it.

Awarding organisations must include one or more tables in their assessment strategy document including the aspects set out in the tables below. Where response options are given in the table, these should be used by an awarding organisation in its own table where possible. However, awarding organisations may use alternative response options if more appropriate to their design.

For the qualification overall:

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Response</b>
Number of Components/units Learners must take	[Enter numerical value]
Number of routes through the specification	[Enter numerical value]

For each individual assessment:

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Response</b>
Reference, for example unit code	[Enter text]
Title	[Enter text]
Assessment method. for example written paper or extended assignment	[Enter text]

Is the assessment mandatory or optional?	Mandatory or Optional
Weighting	[Enter percentage]
Duration	[Enter numerical value]
Assessment series availability, for example January and/or June	[Enter series]
Mode of assessment, for example on-screen or paper based	[Enter text]
Is the assessment marks-based?	Yes or No
Total assessment marks	[Enter numerical value]
Is the assessment directly graded?	Yes or No
Grading method	Awarding process separate to marking  Directly graded by Assessors

## Qualification purposes

Condition FC4.1(a) allows us to specify requirements in relation to the purposes which a Foundation Certificate must meet.

We set out our requirements for the purposes of Condition FC4.1(a) below.

### General purposes

An awarding organisation must ensure that each Foundation Certificate which it makes available, or proposes to make available, meets the following purposes –

(a) To provide Learners with nationally agreed knowledge, understanding and skills

in relation to a broad vocational area, to prepare them for level 3 study in a relevant subject area (General Purpose A).

(b) To provide Learners with the ability to apply knowledge, understanding and skills to practical work-related activities (General Purpose B).

(c) To motivate Learners to complete the qualification and to progress to further study at level 3 (General Purpose C).

(d) To provide accurate and consistent information concerning Learners' attainment in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills assessed as part of the qualification (General Purpose D).

(e) To provide information about a Learner's readiness to progress to level 3 study (General Purpose E).

(f) To provide a basis for schools and colleges to be held accountable for the performance of their Learners (General Purpose F).

## **Assessment requirements**

Condition FC7.1 allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the assessment of Foundation Certificates.

We set out the requirements for the purposes of Condition FC7.1 below.

### **Assessment structure**

An awarding organisation must design a Foundation Certificate which it makes available, or proposes to make available, to comprise Components that may be assessed at different points during the qualification, the results of which are combined to give an overall result.

### **Synoptic assessment**

In designing and setting the assessments for a Foundation Certificate qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must ensure that, taken together, those assessments include questions or tasks which allow Learners to –

- (a) demonstrate the ability to draw together different areas of knowledge, understanding and/or skills from across the full course of study,
- (b) develop responses which allow a Learner to construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning – or an equivalent logical sequence, depending on the nature of the task – which is coherent, relevant and effectively structured, and
- (c) demonstrate knowledge, understanding and skills in response to authentic, vocationally-related contexts and scenarios.

## **Assessment by Examination**

An awarding organisation must ensure that the assessments for a Foundation Certificate include one or more Assessments by Examination through which 40% of the contribution to the overall qualification grade is made available.

In each academic year, an awarding organisation must provide either one or two assessment series during which Learners can complete the Assessment(s) by Examination.

## **Non-exam Assessments**

In each academic year, an awarding organisation must offer either one or two submission windows for Centres to submit marks for the Non-exam Assessments in a Foundation Certificate that it makes available. An awarding organisation may determine whether or not a submission window for Centres to submit marks for Non-exam Assessment coincides with an Assessment by Examination series.

An awarding organisation must set all Non-exam Assessments for a Foundation Certificate.

In doing so, the awarding organisation must specify –

(a) the assessment questions or task(s), and

(b) the conditions under which Learners must complete the questions or task(s).

An awarding organisation may permit a Centre to adapt questions or tasks in Non-exam Assessments for the purpose of making those assessments more accessible to Learners.

## **Marking of assessments**

An awarding organisation must ensure that evidence generated by Learners in the Assessments by Examination for a Foundation Certificate is marked by the awarding organisation or a person connected to it.

Evidence generated by a Learner in a Non-exam Assessment for a Foundation Certificate may be marked –

(a) by the awarding organisation or a person connected to the awarding organisation,

(b) by a Centre, or

(c) through a combination of (a) and (b)

## **Retakes**

An awarding organisation may allow a Learner to retake an Assessment by Examination for a Foundation Certificate.

An awarding organisation may allow a Learner to retake a Non-exam Assessment for a Foundation Certificate through submission, in a new or revised form, of evidence generated by that Learner which he or she has submitted for the purposes of taking the assessment on a previous occasion.

An awarding organisation may permit a Learner to carry forward their result/moderated result for a Non-exam Assessment from a previous attempt at the same Foundation Certificate awarded by the awarding organisation.

# Standard setting requirements

Condition FC8.1 allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the specified levels of attainment that must be used for Foundation Certificates.


Condition FC8.2(b) allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to how those specified levels of attainment are set.

We set out our requirements for the purposes of Conditions FC8.1 and FC8.2(b) below.

For ease of reference, the specified levels of attainment used in Foundation Certificates are referred to below as 'grades'.

## Setting specified levels of attainment

In relation to each Foundation Certificate, an awarding organisation must ensure that the specified levels of attainment take the form of a 3-point scale as specified below, where Distinction represents the highest level of attainment –



- Distinction
- Merit
- Pass

A Learner who does not meet the criteria to be awarded a specified level of attainment on the three-point scale must be issued with a result of 'unclassified'.

The outcomes from units must be converted to a standardised scale to allow the aggregation of units taken across different series. The scheme of aggregation at qualification level must be compensatory.

## Marks-based assessments

The 2 key grade boundaries for Foundation Certificates are –

(a) Pass/Ungraded

## (b) Distinction/Merit

An awarding organisation must set these key grade boundaries for each marks-based unit. In doing this, the awarding organisation must have regard to achieving suitable qualification level outcomes.

An awarding organisation must determine the Merit/Pass grade boundary arithmetically –

(a) The grade Merit/Pass boundary mark is calculated by dividing the mark interval between the Distinction/Merit and Pass/U boundaries by 2.

(b) Where there is a remainder of one, the extra mark is added to the Distinction to Merit mark interval.

# Assessment guidance

Condition FC7.1 allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the assessment of Foundation Certificates.

We set out our guidance for the purposes of Condition FC7.1 below.

## Assessment guidance

This guidance aims to support an awarding organisation in determining the most appropriate methods of assessment for a Foundation Certificate, and the most appropriate approach to marking of the Non-exam Assessment.

In determining which aspects of a Foundation Certificate should be assessed by which assessment method, an awarding organisation should consider which method of assessment would be most appropriate, given –

(a) the Foundation Certificate qualification purposes,

(b) the knowledge, understanding and skills that Learners are required to demonstrate

(c) the need for the assessment to reliably differentiate between Learners' levels of

attainment across the grading scale, and

(d) the assessment requirements

### **Differences between Assessment by Examination and Non-exam Assessment**

Assessment by Examination is defined in Condition FC1.4. The definition does not require written examinations – other methods of assessment may also fall within this definition. For example, if all Learners complete a digital task or practical task set by an awarding organisation, take this simultaneously at a time determined by the awarding organisation, and under supervised conditions specified by the awarding organisation, this will be Assessment by Examination.

Assessment by Examination can provide the opportunity to directly test Learners' knowledge and understanding of the subject area they are studying to secure that the foundations of essential knowledge for vocational ability are in place. It can also assess student learning across the full range of the subject content and, in so doing, may provide an opportunity to compare Learner performance in Assessment by Examination and Non-exam Assessment. It can also assess the ability of Learners to apply their knowledge and understanding, either by mirroring work-place activities or by situating the tasks in authentic vocational scenarios, using case studies or pre-release materials.

Assessment by Examination can also be used to assess practical skills. Awarding organisations should consider how to make sure that such assessments are manageable for centres and can be delivered securely. For example, if Learners need to use specialist equipment to undertake a practical task at the same time, a school or college would need to have enough equipment for every Learner.

The definition of Non-exam Assessment covers any assessment which does not meet the definition of Assessment by Examination. A wide range of specific assessment tasks, set by the awarding organisation may fall within the definition of Non-exam Assessment, with task types including extended tasks involving multiple stages or steps and taken over a period of time and practical, performance or skills-based tasks.

A written or on-screen assessment that all Learners in a Centre take at the same time, under controlled conditions, but where the date and time is determined by each Centre and so may therefore differ between Centres, would be Non-exam Assessment. Alternatively, Non-exam Assessment may include one or more extended task(s) over multiple sessions.

The final product of Non-exam Assessment may be a single document (for example, a write-up of an activity), which may be accompanied by indirect evidence (for example, relating to a professional discussion) of a practical activity. Alternatively, there may be a range and combination of product formats, including written text, artefacts, live performances and recordings. In determining and specifying the product of Non-exam Assessment to be generated by the Learner, an awarding organisation should consider –

- (a) the Validity of the assessment, in terms of measuring appropriately the relevant knowledge, understanding and skills,
- (b) the Manageability of the assessment,
- (c) any threats to the Reliability and integrity of the assessment, and
- (d) the need for the assessment to reliably differentiate between levels of attainment across the grading scale.

Assessment by Examination is distinct from Non-exam Assessment because the former is designed to be taken simultaneously by all relevant Learners at a date and time determined by the awarding organisation whereas the latter is not. Assessment by Examination must be marked by the awarding organisation. This means that Assessment by Examination is appropriate for the assessment of particular knowledge, understanding or skills for which an awarding organisation identifies that it is important for all relevant Learners to be assessed simultaneously. For example, this may be the case if the nature of the content being assessed or how it is being assessed mean it is important that Learners are not aware of the specific assessment tasks in advance of the assessment to maintain the Reliability of the assessment.

### **Ensuring authenticity**

It is important that the results of assessments accurately reflect Learners' levels of attainment. Non-exam Assessment can pose risks to this because Learners not taking the assessment at the same time and/or doing so over an extended period means there is the potential for malpractice. For example, this could give Learners greater opportunity to access inappropriate assistance, such as by using Artificial Intelligence (AI). In determining its approach to Non-exam Assessment (i.e. setting the questions or task(s) for Learners to attempt, setting the conditions under which these should be attempted by Learners, and determining how Learners' responses will be marked), an awarding organisation should consider –

- (a) any risks of malpractice that may arise,

(b) the extent to which these risks are likely to crystallise, given the knowledge, understanding and skills that are to be assessed – for example, tasks designed to assess knowledge and understanding may be more at risk of malpractice using AI,

(c) the extent to which these risks may undermine the ability of the assessment to accurately reflect Learners' attainment, and

(d) the controls that may be required to address these risks.

### **Synoptic assessment**

The assessment requirements state that the assessments for a Foundation Certificate, taken together (whether the Assessments by Examination or Non-exam Assessments), must include questions or tasks which allow Learners to demonstrate the ability to draw together different areas of knowledge, understanding and/or skills from across the full course of study. The assessment requirements also state that Learners must have the opportunity to produce developed responses which allow them to construct a sustained line of reasoning – or an equivalent logical sequence, depending on the nature of the task – which is coherent, relevant and effectively structured. This will involve connecting and integrating ideas, concepts and techniques from multiple areas, to mirror real-world practice in the relevant vocational area. This is to support the development of higher-level thinking, the Validity of qualification outcomes, and Learners' onward progression.

The assessment requirements also state that the Assessments by Examination and Non-exam Assessments the assessments for a Foundation Certificate, taken together, must include questions or tasks which allow Learners to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and skills in response to authentic, vocationally-related contexts and scenarios. This is so that Learners encounter assessments which are aligned to real-world practice, professional attitudes and behaviours.

### **Adaptation of assessments**

The assessment requirements permit a Centre to adapt questions or tasks in Non-exam Assessments for the purpose of tailoring the assessment to take account of individual Learner interests, local contexts and Manageability for Centres. This might, for example, be based on the geographical location of a Centre, or the resources it has available. In doing so, a Centre must not change the knowledge, understanding and skills assessed, or the Level of Demand of the assessment, and must not limit a Learner's ability to achieve any of the specified levels of attainment. The awarding organisation should consider the measures it will put in place to support a Centre in making acceptable and appropriate adaptations and the monitoring it will undertake to ensure that the awarding organisation has visibility of any adaptations and their appropriateness.

## Marking

Condition H1.1 states as follows –

“For each qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must have in place effective arrangements to ensure that, as far as possible, the criteria against which Learners’ performance will be differentiated are –

- (a) understood by Assessors and accurately applied, and
- (b) applied consistently by Assessors, regardless of the identity of the Assessor, Learner or Centre.”

The assessment requirements allow the Non-exam Assessment for a Foundation Certificate to be marked by –

- (a) the awarding organisation or a person connected to the awarding organisation,
- (b) a Centre, or
- (c) a combination of the two

Whichever approach an awarding organisation takes, it must still achieve compliance with General Condition H1.1.

When determining the approach to marking Non-exam Assessment, an awarding organisation should consider –

- (a) the Validity of assessment, in terms of measuring appropriately the relevant knowledge, understanding and skills,
- (b) the Manageability of the assessment,
- (c) any threats to the Reliability and integrity of the assessment, and
- (d) the need for the assessment to reliably differentiate between levels of attainment across the grading scale.

In doing so, an awarding organisation should consider the following factors –

- (a) the nature of the knowledge, understanding and skills being assessed and who may be best placed to assess them,
- (b) the nature of the assessment evidence, including whether the evidence generated by Learners is likely to arise naturally (that is, not be planned) and/or be

ephemeral in nature, and

(c) the need for marking standards to be consistently applied across centres over the lifetime of the qualification

### Question 55

Do you have any comments on the drafting of the proposed Conditions, requirements or guidance for Foundation Certificates?

1. For ease of reference, the specified levels of attainment used in Foundation Certificates are referred to in these requirements as 'grades' with the setting of those specified levels of attainment referred to as 'grading'. [↩](#)

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