



Joint Council for
Qualifications^{CIC}

Guidance for students, parents and guardians:
GCSEs and AS/A Levels in England
Summer 2021



What is this document for, and what will it tell me?

Following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK government has decided that the Summer 2021 examination series will not go ahead as planned. Instead, teachers will determine your grades, based upon a range of evidence verified by your school or college.

These results will then be reviewed by the exam boards who designed each course, before awarding the final grades which reflect your performance on content you have been taught, and allow you to confidently progress to the next stage of your education or into employment.

This JCQ document provides an overview of the most important information that you and your parents or guardians need to know about how grades will be awarded this summer. This includes a timeline of what is happening and when; how teachers, schools and colleges will determine your grades; and when you will receive your results.

JCQ and the exam boards have been working together actively to support teachers, schools and colleges to determine your grades this summer. Your school or college will be setting their own approach for teachers to follow which will be developed in line with guidance from the exam boards, Ofqual and the Department for Education.

You can find more information in our full guidance document, published on the JCQ website [here](#).

What is happening, and when?



How will I be assessed?

Teachers will initially determine your grades, which will then be reviewed by your school or college. The professional judgement of teachers will only be based on what you have been taught and your teachers will use a range of evidence from across the course of study to make their decision. Teachers can assess you based on:

- Records of your performance on the content you have been taught over the entire course of your studies.
- Non-exam assessment, often referred to as coursework or internal assessments, even if you have not fully completed it.
- Work you have produced in tasks set by your school or college that reflects the specification, format and marking of exam boards. This could include substantial classwork, homework, internal tests or mock exams.
- Schools and colleges also have the option to set tests for you in order to gather further evidence. Teachers can develop these tests or use assessment materials provided by the exam boards. Importantly, these tests are not formal exams, nor are they designed to play the role of exams.

Your teachers do not need to assess you on every aspect of each subject. They just need a range of evidence that shows your performance on the aspects you have been taught.

In most cases, the range of evidence that your teachers use to inform your grade will be consistent across your class or cohort for each qualification. However, your school or college may decide that a different range of evidence may be more appropriate to fairly inform your grade, if, for example, you have missed significantly more teaching than others in your class.

Keeping you in the know

Your teachers will tell you which pieces of work will be used as evidence to inform your overall grade. You will have the opportunity to raise any concerns about the evidence being used, for example, if the evidence was affected by personal circumstances, such as illness. Your teacher will make the final judgement about what evidence is to be included - this is not a negotiation. Your teachers will not be able to tell you the grade they have submitted to the exam board.

How is the evidence used?

No single piece of evidence will necessarily be more important than another, as teachers will be assessing you based on a range of evidence that can give an overall picture of your performance.

Ofqual has issued separate [guidance](#) to schools, colleges and teachers about the submission of teacher assessed grades, including the evidence that can be used.

Determining grades

Once all the evidence is selected and assessments are complete, teachers will decide on an overall grade. They will do this objectively – so, if you are performing consistently at a grade B standard in a subject at A Level, you should be awarded a grade B. Exam boards will provide further advice and guidance to show the standard of work expected for particular grades, including additional grade descriptors, to supplement those previously published by Ofqual.

It is important to say that much like with exams in normal years, the grades issued by teachers, schools and colleges will not take account of your potential. They will be a snapshot of the standard you are performing at based on a wide range of evidence. It should be no easier or harder for you to achieve a grade this year based on your performance than in previous years.

What happens after my teacher determines my grade in a subject?

Once a teacher has determined your grade, it will be reviewed by other teachers in your school or college, so grades are determined consistently with your school or college's policy. Exam boards will check these policies to make sure they meet their requirements.

Reasonable adjustments, access arrangements and special consideration

If you have special educational needs, and/or are disabled, and require reasonable adjustments, your school or college should have ensured that these were in place when evidence was gathered. Where appropriate reasonable adjustments were not in place when you took an assessment that is being used as evidence, your teacher should take that into account when determining your grade. Your school or college could also consider whether other evidence could be used instead.

Special consideration requests will not apply in the usual way this summer because you will not be taking exams. If you think that your performance in an assessment has been affected by illness or personal circumstances, you should talk to your school or college about this as soon as possible. It is important that you raise any such instances before your school or college submits your grade.

If you have any questions about how your personal circumstances will be taken into account or want to raise anything with your school or college, now is the best time to speak to them. You should not wait until after you get your results.

Private Candidates – see separate guidance [here](#).

When will I receive my grades and what happens next?

- AS and A Level students will receive their results on Tuesday 10 August 2021.
- GCSE students will receive their results on Thursday 12 August 2021.

The details on when and where you collect your results will be up to your school or college, and they will contact you with these plans in due course. Their plans will take into account any Covid and social distancing measures which are still in place in August.

Appeals

Although everyone will be working hard to make sure you are issued with the correct grades on results day, there will also be an appeals system as a safety net to fix any genuine errors that were not identified earlier on.

If you believe an error has been made in determining your grade, you will have a right to appeal. There are two stages to the appeals process:

Stage 1: centre review

If you don't think you have been issued with the correct grade, you can appeal to your school or college, who will review whether they:

- made an administrative error, e.g. they submitted an incorrect grade; they used an incorrect assessment mark when determining your grade.
- did not apply a procedure correctly, e.g. they did not follow their Centre Policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or mitigating circumstances, such as illness.

To help you decide whether to appeal, you can request that your school or college shares with you the following information on results day if not before:

- their Centre Policy
- the sources of evidence used to determine your grade along with any grades/marks associated with them
- details of any special circumstances that have been taken into account in determining your grade, e.g. access arrangements, mitigating circumstances such as illness

Stage 2: appeal to the exam board

If you still don't think you have the correct grade after the centre review is complete, you can ask your school or college to appeal to the exam board, who will review whether

- the school or college made an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement¹ in the choice of evidence from which they determined your grade and/or in the determination of your grade from that evidence.

¹ A reasonable judgement is one that is supported by evidence. An exercise of judgement will not be unreasonable simply because a student considers that an alternative grade should have been awarded, even if the student puts forward supporting evidence. There may be a difference of opinion without there being an unreasonable exercise of judgement. The reviewer will not remark individual assessments to make fine judgements but will take a holistic approach based on the overall evidence.

- the school or college did not apply a procedure correctly, e.g. they did not follow their Centre Policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or mitigating circumstances, such as illness.
- the exam board made an administrative error, e.g. they changed your grade during the processing of grades.

At both stages of the process you will need to submit your appeal to your school or college and give them your written consent to conduct the appeal or submit it to the exam board on your behalf. It's important to remember that **your grade can go down, up or stay the same** through either stage of the process.

If you have a place at university that is dependent on your appeal, you should tell the university you are hoping to go to so they can decide how to handle your offer. You should also tell your school or college so they can ask the exam board to prioritise your appeal. The timelines for priority and non-priority appeals will be as follows:

10 August to 7 September: priority appeals window

- » **10 August to 16 August:** student requests centre review
- » **10 August to 20 August:** centre conducts centre review
- » **11 August to 23 August:** centre submits appeal to exam board
- **10 August to end October:** majority of non-priority appeals take place
 - » **10 August to 3 September:** student requests centre review
 - » **10 August to 10 September:** centre conducts centre review
 - » **11 August to 17 September:** centre submits appeal to exam board

Finally, if you believe the exam board has made a procedural error in handling your appeal, you can apply to Ofqual's Exam Procedures Review Service to review the process undertaken by the exam board.

Appeals Process

After results day

Results issued (10/12 August)

1. **Student** asks centre for review because they think there has been an error

Note: Grades can go up, down or stay the same

Centre review: Centre checks for errors and process issues. Centre wants to change grade?

No

Yes

Awarding Organisation checks and issues final grade; may require input from Centre

Centre informs student of outcome

2. If **Student** thinks the error has not been resolved they ask centre for Awarding Organisation appeal

Centre submits Awarding Organisation appeal

Note: Grades can go up, down or stay the same

Awarding Organisation appeal:
Have processes been followed, is the grade a reasonable exercise of academic judgement?

No

Yes

Awarding Organisation issues final grade; may require input from Centre

Awarding Organisation issues final grade

Centre informs student of outcome

3. If dissatisfied, applications may be made to Ofqual's EPRS (Exam Procedures Review Service)



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