

JCQ guidance – ASCL summary document

26 March 2021

This guidance is a summary of the JCQ guidance on the determination of grades for AS/A-levels and GCSE in summer 2021. It is not formal ASCL guidance.

Key dates on the timeline

31 March – publication of subject-level assessment materials

19 April – publication of additional subject support materials (exemplification)

Early summer term – publication of the appeals policy

30 April – deadline for submission of Centre Policy

18 June – deadline for grade submissions

10 August – A-level results day

12 August – GCSE results day

16 August – deadline for receiving priority student appeals

23 August – deadline for schools and colleges referring priority appeals to awarding organisation

3 September – deadline for receiving non-priority appeals

17 September – deadline for schools and colleges referring non-priority appeals to awarding organisation

External quality assurance

There are three stages to the external quality assurance conducted by exam boards:

- **Stage 1 – centre policy review** – your centre policy will either be accepted, or exam boards may contact centres where there are gaps in the policy or points of clarification. Centres should not wait for approval before beginning the grading process.
- **Stage 2 – virtual centre visits** - online visits from an exam board where there are concerns about the centre policy, taking place in May and June.
- **Stage 3 – post submission sampling** – a random and a risk-based sampling of subject-level evidence. Risk-based sampling includes significantly different results from previous years, and concerns raised in stages 1 and 2.

Centre policy

- All schools and colleges will be required to create a centre policy outlining the high-level approach they are intending to use.
- The policy must be signed by the head of centre and submitted to the JCQ CAP portal by 30 April. In addition, heads of centre must complete the centre policy summary webform, also by 30 April. Schools and colleges will only need to submit one policy for all JCQ exam boards.
- There is a JCQ pro-forma that can be adopted in full or adapted [here](#).

- It is recommended that the centre policy includes sections on: 1) a statement of intent; 2) roles and responsibilities for key staff; 3) training support and guidance; 4) the use of appropriate evidence; 5) determining the teacher assessed grade; 6) internal and external quality assurance; 7) comparison of grades to previous cohorts; 8) access arrangements and special considerations; 9) addressing disruption; 10) objectivity; 11) recording decisions and retention of evidence; 12) authenticating evidence; 13) confidentiality and malpractice; 14) private candidates; 15) results; and 16) appeals.

Guidance on grading for teachers

- The guidance sets out a five stage process of grading:
 1. Consider what has been taught
 2. Collect the evidence
 3. Evaluate the quality of the evidence
 4. Establish whether the proposed range of evidence is appropriate for all students
 5. Assign a grade
- There is further detail about to use and apply the grade descriptors and exemplification of grades. Subject-level grade descriptors will be published by 31 March.

Using [historical] data to support the grading process

- Schools and colleges should use historical exam data from 2017-2019 as a high-level check as part of internal quality assurance. This should be done on a grade, subject and centre level.
- Schools and colleges should also consider the grades of students with protected characteristics and how these compare to students in previous years.
- Schools and colleges must not use historical data as a limiting factor in the grading process this year, but as a high level check.
- Schools and colleges selected for external quality assurance must be able to explain how their results compare to previous years and the reasons for this. The separate [Ofqual guidance](#) suggests that centres where 2021 results are unusually low or unusually high compared to 2017-2019 data should be targeted for external quality assurance.

Guidance on additional assessment materials

- Additional assessment materials are optional and can be used flexibly and in a range of contexts.
- Because the way in which they can be used is flexible, and some students may have seen the additional assessment materials before, advice is given on how to understand the outcomes.

Reasonable adjustments, access arrangements and special consideration

- The normal reasonable adjustments and access arrangements students would receive in exams should be exercised. SENCOs and specialist teachers should advise on this.
- Where reasonable adjustment and access arrangements are not possible (including for evidence produced before March), teachers should factor this into their grading and document this.
- Because the use of evidence is very flexible, special consideration will not normally apply.
- Where a student may be eligible for special consideration, such as temporary illness this summer, then students should make schools and colleges aware of this before

submission; special consideration should only be applied where there is evidence this had a material impact on the student's achievement in that assessment.

- Special consideration must not be applied in relation to loss of learning due to the pandemic.

Submission of grades

- Centres can submit a U grade.
- For tiered subjects, the grade must reflect the tier of entry.
- Submitted grades must be kept confidential and not given to students or parents before results day.
- Heads of Centre will have to sign a single Head of Centre declaration on submission of results.

Private candidates

- Private candidates should be assessed in a similar way to other students.
- Centres taking on private candidates should ensure they understand what the candidate has studied based on a short interview or questionnaire, and design the assessment of the candidate around this.
- This may mean using different forms of evidence to the school or college's current cohort.
- Private candidates must be told what evidence will be used before making an entry.

Malpractice

- Malpractice by centres or centre staff includes: entering students who had not intended to sit exams in summer 2021; disregard of the centre policy; not teaching sufficient content to award a grade; fabrication of evidence or inappropriate levels of support; disclosing a submitted grade; intentionally inflating grades; failure to comply with external quality assurance checks or the appeals process.
- Malpractice by students or those acting on their behalf includes: fabricating evidence or plagiarising work; putting undue pressure on teachers to submit a certain grade.
- Instances of undue pressure, if they continue, should be reported to the exam board as potential malpractice.

Appeals

- There are three stages of appeal, that will take place throughout August – October:
 1. Centre review – a student will ask the centre to check whether it made an administrative or procedural error. If so, the centre will request the grade is changed.
 2. Awarding organisation appeal – must be submitted by centres on behalf of the candidates if the candidate wants it.
 3. Ofqual Exam Procedures Review Service – if the candidate thinks the awarding organisation did not follow correct procedures.
- The grounds for appeals at Stage 2 (AO appeal) are: the centre did not follow its own policy; the centre did not undertake internal QA; the centre did not allow access arrangements; the AO made an administrative error; the centre did not exercise reasonable academic judgement in the selection of evidence or the determination of the grade.
- At every stage, a student's result could go up or down.