

## Current questions for CCEA arising from decision by DE on awarding of GCSE, AS and A level grades in 2020

[CCEA - GCSE, AS and A level Awarding Summer 2020 Technical Information \(30 April 2020\)](#)

[CCEA - GCSE, AS and A level Technical Information Supplementary Questions and Answers](#)

(Version 2, 11 May 2020)

A series of questions which ASCL members posed to CCEA and the responses as provided

1. Some Year 11 pupils were planning to sit a GCSE early, most likely Maths. What plans are in place for them?

See CCEA Q+A no 26.

*I have a number of Year 10 students cashing in a GCSE qualification in Summer 2020.*

*Should I include them in the rank order with the other students?*

*Yes, all students cashing in for the same qualification should be included in the rank order (at each grade), no matter what year group they are in.*

*And in Technical information p4*

<i>Candidates cashing in after one year, for example Year 11 (or younger)</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Candidates entering units only, for example Year 11</i>	No	No

2. Can Yr 11 pupils get a grade for the short course in Religious Studies? Lots of students complete only a Short Course in Yr11 and never intend to sit the full course. It is a stand-alone qualification and the school can predict this grade.

See CCEA technical Information p4

GCSE – Summary of Information Required from Centres

<i>Candidate Groups in Summer 2020</i>	<i>Centre Assessment Grade Required?</i>	<i>Included in Rank Order Within Each Grade?</i>
<i>Candidates entered for all GCSE units and GCSE cash-in (including short course)</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Candidates entered for some GCSE units and GCSE cash-in (including short course)</i>	Yes	Yes

3. One of the key sentences in the CCEA documentation is within the Head of Centre declaration "if the profile is substantially different from what might be expected on the previous two years and the prior attainment of this year's students, the grades will be adjusted to bring them into line". Given that CCEA has no data on our GCSE students, is it implicit that GCSE grades, unless substantially different from previous two years, will not be altered? As an addition, the Minister said that CCEA would use 3 years of comparative data for their modelling but the Guidance to Head of Centre says two. Which is correct?

See CCEA Q+A no 15

*CCEA, along with all other awarding organisations, awards grades on the basis of comparable outcomes. For Summer 2020, this will include information about previous centre performance in a qualification and expected grade distributions at full CCEA cohort level. This is to ensure that students in previous or future years are not disadvantaged as a result of decisions made in an awarding series. This approach will continue to inform any decisions on subject-level outcomes made in Summer 2020.*

*If the centre submits data that is very different to previous years, it should record this in its internal record-keeping and decision-making system.*

4. Within AS, the wording reads "if they choose to sit any AS units, alongside the A2 units, they will be awarded the highest grade at A Level from either route". This suggests, that within a subject, a pupil could sit some, but not all, AS units in 2021. It is very important to know if that is possible as it may change how schools approach some subjects. There may be units which schools would consider without pupils sitting all AS units. If selected AS entry is possible, can these include AS coursework that they have completed this year and which is sitting uncashed? Clarity on all these would be helpful.

See CCEA Q+A no 12

*In Summer 2021, there are two options for AS students: to take an A level grade based on AS missed components or to sit AS units alongside their A2 units. If they decide to sit AS units, are they required to sit them all or can they choose to sit only one? Can they choose, for example, to submit AS coursework that they have completed this year and which is not yet moderated and have a missed paper calculation for the examination?*

*In Summer 2021, A2 students can choose to enter all, some or none of the available AS units in that series. This includes AS coursework units where work was completed in the 2019–20 academic year. If they submit their AS coursework, it will be included in moderation for Summer 2021.*

5. Some Year 13 pupils had planned to sit a full A Level (AS and A2) early, most likely Maths. What plans are in place for them?

See CCEA Q+A no 12

*I have a number of students in Year 13 who are completing GCE Mathematics in one year. Normally, these students wouldn't cash in their qualification until Year 14. Should the students cash in this year?*

*CCEA is aware of this situation and will work to identify the students affected. We will make contact with the relevant centres over the coming weeks to provide further information on how this will be managed.*

6. A level- there is no mention of GCSE profiles being used by CCEA in calculating A level grades. Everything is left to AS scores for the current cohort and historic data for the past 2 years at AS and A2. If you have a subject with 15+ years of excellent AS results which have gone 'pear shaped' in the past two years then you may be in trouble. We need to know if GCSE profiles will be used by CCEA in calculating A levels (and AS for that matter, though this is less important given the transient nature of the 2020 AS grades). And if not, then why not?

*See CCEA Q+A no 16*

*Will GCSE profiles be used for the A level statistical modelling?*

*Expected qualification-level outcomes at A level will be informed by students' GCSE prior attainment data, where available. This is the same as in any examination series. GCSE profiles may also be used to inform A level statistical standardisation*

7. Yr14 taking AS re-sits. Does the rank order of AS cohort include them? If they're down as cash-in, will they now be getting a new AS grade, even though these are to be stand-alone?

*See CCEA technical Information p3*

*GCE AS and A Level – Summary of Information Required from Centres*

<i>Candidate Groups in Summer 2020</i>	<i>Centre Assessment Grade Required?</i>	<i>Included in Rank Order Within Each Grade?</i>
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*Candidates entered for A2 units and A level cash-in, who are resitting some AS units in 2020 but are not cashing in AS in 2020*

*Yes, A level only*

*Yes, A level only*

8. Art A2 In the case of the Y14, they have already submitted their A2 Art essays (20% of A2) to CCEA around 20<sup>th</sup> February and these are normally marked over Easter. Will CCEA now declare these marks null and void and not use them in any way as they have for other coursework/controlled assessment?

*See CCEA Q+A no 18*

*Year 14 Art and Design students have already submitted their A2 Art and Design essays (20% of A2) to CCEA around 20 February, and these are normally marked over Easter. Will CCEA be marking this work and counting it towards the grades issued to A2 Art and Design students?*

*CCEA will not be marking A2 Art and Design essays; however, teachers could use this work to help inform their centre assessment grades and the rank orders*

9. Appeals. The direction of travel for Ofqual is 'process only'. A candidate can appeal to see if the school or exam board added it up wrong or pressed the wrong button but not challenge the grade awarded. What are the plans for CCEA?

*See Technical Information p12*

*There will be an appeals process for students who do not feel the grade they have been awarded reflects their performance. CCEA Regulation will consult on the appeals process,*

and more information is available [here](#) . The standard post-results services such as access to scripts, reviews of marking and reviews of moderation will not be available this summer.

10. Fees. Clarity is sought on what will happen, mindful that CCEA is a state-subsidised organisation unlike English AOs. Given the balance of work in the new process, what can schools be expected to pay?

*Response from CCEA: CCEA will share further information with centres on fees for awarding grades this summer, in due course*

11. Autumn series exams. The 'early opportunity' exam series has been ruled out by CCEA/DE but is a commitment from Ofqual and is currently part of their consultation exercise. Although the English AOs may balk at the idea for every subject at every exam level, it seems that something will run. How do schools respond to the challenge by parents and pupils that NI pupils will be disadvantaged compared to English pupils at GCSE and A level, and compared to NI pupils who take exams through English boards?

*See Technical Information p5*

*Because education policy is devolved here, the Minister of Education must assess the evidence available and then make a decision based on what he believes is appropriate for the education system in Northern Ireland. Students in Northern Ireland will have the opportunity to re-enter for their assessments in Summer 2021 rather than in an additional sitting in the 2020–21 academic year.*

12. FoI requests. The guidance from all the exam regulators indicates that we are protected from parental requests for grades through the Data Protection Act up to a point. It seems that this protection ends once the final grades are given out in August. Schools need clarity on this part of the process and guidance on how to deal with the post-results phase where it seems that parents can request everything from the school about their child's grades.

We (ASCL) continue to seek clarification on this important matter.

13. Consultation. Ofqual is running a detailed consultation process on a wide range of issues related to the grading process. It is 68 pages long and full of arguments 'for and against' and a suggested best way forward on issues (such as appeals). You can see a good summary [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofqual-seeks-views-on-gcse-and-a-level-grading-proposals-for-2020) with links to the actual document - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofqual-seeks-views-on-gcse-and-a-level-grading-proposals-for-2020>. Will CCEA be running a similar consultation process?

*See Technical Information p12*

*There will be an appeals process for students who do not feel the grade they have been awarded reflects their performance. CCEA Regulation will consult on the appeals process, and more information is available [here](#) . The standard post-results services such as access to scripts, reviews of marking and reviews of moderation will not be available this summer.*

14. Advice to Centres. On page 4 of the Head of Centre guidance document states that, "A written record should be retained of the reasons for which each centre assessment grade has been arrived at." Four key questions emerge from this:

- a) What should that look like? (is specific guidance forthcoming)
- b) Who is responsible for doing this?

- c) Why are we doing this? (is it to identify Malpractice, assist with Appeals or for evidence in Fol requests?) Unless schools are given a guarantee that CCEA's computer-generated grades will play a secondary role to school-provided grades to it is worth asking why this needs to be done at all; and if CCEA will be doing the same for each individual grade they award, especially if they overturn the school's grade.

*Response from CCEA: We are advising schools to keep robust records of decisions to help ensure that as the process for managing this summer's grades becomes more clear, centres will have robust governance systems in place should they need to confirm decisions made to support their submission of data*

15. Schools will be given more guidance about how to upload the centre assessment grades after 29<sup>th</sup> May but will there be any more advice from CCEA on how to calculate those grades and the rank orders in the first place?

*See Section 5. CENTRE ASSESSMENT GRADES AND RANK ORDERING OF STUDENTS  
CCEA Technical Information- for detailed information.*

16. Is there an accurate deadline for submission? CCEA has said not before the end of May but a date would be good.

*See CCEA Q+A no 20*

*Is there a published deadline for submission of centre assessment grades and rank orders? Submission of centre assessment grades and student rank orders will be carried out using an application that will be made available through CCEA's Central Login from the week beginning 25 May 2020. Completion dates for the exercise are as follows:*

- GCE (AS and A level) – 5 June 2020
- GCSE – 12 June 2020
- Entry Level – 5 June 2020
- Occupational Studies and vocationally related qualifications – 12 June 2020.

17. How to deal with pupils who study subjects in other schools. For example, we have a pupil who studies History at xxx due to a timetable clash with Modern Languages in YYY. She will be entered by us to sit her exams and will take them at YYY and the result will appear in our results; however, we have very little information on which to rank her with our pupils as she obviously does the tests and homework set by her teacher in XXX. Can CCEA provide guidance on how schools should handle such collaborative pupils

*See CCEA technical Information p7 and 8*

*Students who are taught at a different centre (consortium)*

*Students who are being taught at a different centre from the one where the entry was made should be included in the grading and rank ordering of the centre that made the entry. The centre making the entry should consult with the teaching centre and compare evidence on student performance in both centres to establish an agreed grade and rank order position. The home centre, which is making the entry for the student, has final responsibility for submitting a centre assessment grade and incorporating the student into the home centre's rank order.*

*Example 1:*

*A school sends one student, called Lucy Smith, to another school for A Level Geography because of a timetable clash. The school where Lucy studies most other subjects is the school that has entered her for a CCEA A Level Geography award.*

*The school that is teaching Lucy Smith for A Level Geography has assessed her as a grade A. They would also have ranked her as 7th at grade A out of a total of 9 students assessed as grade A at their school. There are students from three different schools being taught at this school.*

*The school entering Lucy notes that the teaching school ranks Lucy 7th; however, they have to rank Lucy Smith amongst their other A Level Geography students, and they have decided Lucy Smith is the best of their grade A students. They have done this by discussing Lucy's performance with the teaching school and comparing all the information available about Lucy's performance with the performances of the students being taught geography in their school.*

*Example 2:*

*A school sends three students to a local further education college for Health and Social Care. The school will enter its own students. As there are only three students entered in total at the school for Health and Social Care, there are grades that no student will have been allocated.*

*The school entering the students will have responsibility for submitting a centre assessment grade and rank order for the students. The school entering the students should take into consideration all the information available to them, such as the grade and rank order the FE college has provided to them, as well as all other information available to them. The students were graded by the FE college as follows: two at grade B and one at grade D. They were placed in a rank order by the FE college amongst a much bigger cohort.*

*The rank order submitted by the school entering the students may look like this:*

Grade A*		N/A
Grade A		N/A
Grade B	1	Lucy Smith
	2	John Brown
Grade C		N/A
Grade D	1	Marie Jones
Grade E		N/A

18. What procedure is in place for schools who wish to highlight with evidence (e.g. CAT scores etc) that the 2020 GCSE cohort is much stronger than the 2018 and 2019?

*See CCEA Q+A no 21*

*What procedure is in place for schools who wish to highlight with evidence that the 2020 GCSE cohort is much stronger than the 2018 and 2019 cohorts?*

*For each student, CCEA will only accept two pieces of data – the centre assessment grade for the student and their position in the rank order within that grade. No other information will be accepted or required. When arriving at your decisions on centre assessment grades, all evidence at your disposal should be considered to ensure that, as far as possible, the data you provide is a fair and accurate reflection of the ability of the student and of the cohort as a whole.*

19. How do we allocate a grade and rank order to students who have been absent for most of the Y12 because of health issues or are school refusers, for whom we do not have internally generated evidence to rank order within a grade?

*See CCEA Q+A no 24*

*How do schools allocate a grade and rank order to students who have been absent for most of the academic year and for whom they have little evidence, for example as a result of health issues?*

*Managing this situation will prove challenging for all concerned – students, parents and the school. Where evidence is available, no matter how limited, it should be considered. The school should also seek the views of a tutor or external agencies, where applicable, to help them arrive at an accurate assessment of the student(s).*

*In the event that a Head of Centre does not feel able to reach a judgement about a particular student, it is important that this is communicated to them and their parents/carers as early as possible, so that all parties are clear about their individual situation.*

20. Students with a late diagnosis requiring access arrangements which have been accepted for summer exams but were not applied to internal assessments/mocks. Is there any guidance on the quantum of adjustment that we should make or is that down to the individual centre?

*See CCEA Q+A no 25*

*We have a student who has only recently received a diagnosis that requires access arrangements to be put in place; however, these were not applied to internal assessments/mock examinations. What advice would you give to help us arrive at a centre assessment grade?*

*In these instances, the centre is best placed to judge how any diagnosis that requires access arrangements might affect a student's performance. If the diagnosis was confirmed at a late stage, evidence held on the student's past performance must be considered in that context. This will ensure that the centre assessment grade reflects, as accurately as possible, likely achievement with access arrangements in place.*

21. Can CCEA provide clear guidance on Privately entered candidates?

*See CCEA Technical Information p11*

### **13. PRIVATE CANDIDATES**

*Where centres have accepted entries from private candidates, those students should be included where the Head of Centre is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement.*

*We appreciate that there may be instances where students do not have existing or substantive relationships with centres and understand that making judgements about these individual performances may be more difficult. We are exploring this issue with JCQ and other awarding organisations and will provide further guidance as soon as possible.*

*see also q36-41- updated CCEA Q+A issued 11 May 2020*

22. My Year 13 students normally cash in their AS qualifications at the end of Year 14. This year, should we cash in our students at the end of Year 13 instead?

*See CCEA Q+A Version 2 published 11 May no 29*

*This will be a decision for you and your students. If your students do not cash in this year, they will not receive an AS qualification grade in Summer 2020. They will, however, have the option to receive an AS qualification grade in Summer 2021 that will be calculated on the basis of their performance in their A2 examinations next year.*

*However, should the students concerned not be taking the associated A2 units in Summer 2021, they will not be able to receive an AS qualification grade in Summer 2021. In this scenario, if an AS qualification grade is required, an AS level cash-in entry should be made in Summer 2020.*

23. We have a number of students that are doing four AS level qualifications. These students normally wait to see their unit level results in each before they decide which ones to carry on into their A2 year and then put a late cash-in on the system for the one subject they are not carrying forward. Is this possible in Summer 2020?

*See CCEA Q+A Version 2 published 11 May no 30*

*No, if your students have yet to decide which AS qualification they will drop, they should cash in all of their AS qualifications. Failure to do so will mean they will not be awarded an AS qualification grade in the subject and achievement in this subject will be lost.*

*If a student is sure which subject they will drop, then an AS cash-in needs to be put on for that subject only.*

*We are working to identify all centres and students in this scenario, and we will make contact to discuss the entry options available to these students.*

24. I have a number of students in Year 14 who sat their AS examinations in Summer 2019 but did not cash in their AS qualifications. Instead, they decided to delay cash-in until Summer 2020. How will these be managed?

*See CCEA Q+A Version 2 published 11 May no 31*

*For those Year 14 students that did not cash in their AS qualifications in Summer 2019, the unit level marks they achieved last year will make up their AS qualification grade. There are a number of potential solutions that we are working through to process these students' grades.*

*We will work to identify the students affected and make contact with centres in due course.*

25. I have a number of Year 14 students who were due to resit some or all of their AS units in Summer 2020 and did not cash in their AS qualifications in Summer 2019. Should we cash in these students?

*See CCEA Q+A Version 2 published 11 May no 32*

*We recognise that those students will have been able to calculate their AS qualification grade from Summer 2019 using their uniform marks without cashing in their qualification. However, if they wish to receive a new AS qualification grade in Summer 2020, a cash-in must be entered for them, but this is ultimately a decision for the school and the student. If they do cash in, the student will appear on the school's rank order for that subject or subjects in Summer 2020.*

*No matter what decision you make, we would ask that the AS unit level resit entry for each student remains on the system.*

#### **Supplementary Question**

Can I exclude a Year 14 student who is resitting an AS unit from the AS rank order if I am not confident that they are in a position to improve their AS qualification grade? For example, one AS Geography student has a uniform mark total from Summer 2019 that puts them just over a grade boundary. They opted to resit one or more of their AS units in Summer 2020 to improve their grade, but I know that they have not improved. I will

therefore place them where I judge they belong in the rank order. At the end of the standardisation process, they may well drop below the boundary and into the grade below, which I wish to avoid.

*No, you cannot exclude a Year 14 student from the AS rank order if they have a cash-in on the system. We will, however, work with centres that have students in this situation. We will ensure that they get the highest grade, whether it's the notional grade achieved in 2019 or the statistical grade achieved in Summer 2020. We will be able to see that they have previous attainment on the system. We are exploring how our application can flag these students and award them the higher of the two grades – the notional AS qualification grade achieved (but not awarded) in Summer 2019, or the AS qualification grade awarded in Summer 2020.*

26. I have some Year 14 students who were due to resit some or all of their AS units in Summer 2020 and did cash in their AS qualifications in Summer 2019. Should we cash in these students?

*See CCEA Q+A Version 2 published 11 May no 33*

*Again, this is a decision for the school and the students. If they wish to receive a new AS qualification grade in Summer 2020, a cash-in must be entered for them. They will then appear on the school's rank order for that subject or subjects. No matter what decision you make, we would ask that the AS unit resit entry for the student remains on the system. No matter what decision you make, we would ask that the AS unit level resit entry for each student remains on the system.*

27. My current Year 13 students are taking their GCE qualification in a linear fashion, i.e. they will take all of their examinations at the end of the two years, in Summer 2021. Will I still be able to take this approach

*See CCEA Q+A Version 2 published 11 May no 34*

*Yes, your students can still do all of their examinations as planned in Summer 2021.*

28. Circumstances this year have meant that aspects of our school's usual examinations entry pattern have changed. For example, we normally cash in our students' AS qualifications at the end of their A2 year, but this year we will be cashing them in at the end of their AS year. Does this constitute malpractice?

*See CCEA Q+A Version 2 published 11 May no 35*

*CCEA recognises that schools may well have to adjust their examinations entry patterns to meet the challenges presented this year. Therefore, changes to usual examinations entry patterns will not constitute malpractice.*

**Please see the [CCEA Technical Information – Supplementary Questions and Answers](#) re issued 11 May 2020 for full details**