



Approach to Awarding for 2020-21

May 2021 update

Version 3 | 27 May

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Version control

This is version 2.1 of the NCFE Approach to Awarding 2020–21 document. Updates to this version are listed below.

Update history (version 2.1 – 27 May 2021)

- Updates reflecting version 2.0 of Quality Assurance Policy for Awarding
- Updates reflecting the publication of additional guidance
- Additional detail provided regarding Special Considerations Policy

Update history (version 2.0 – 24 March 2021)

- Updates reflecting the publication of the VCRF
- Confirmation of Ofqual qualification categorisation convention
- Extended guidance on teacher assessed grading added
- Minor changes to wording within quality assurance section to clarify latest approach
- Further information on reasonable adjustments, and special considerations added
- Further information on results, and appeals added
- T Level specific additions to the Blueprint in Annex A

Executive summary

This document sets out NCFE's approach to assessment and awarding for the remainder of the 2020–21 session. It sets out our response to the outcome of the [Ofqual consultation on alternative arrangements for awarding](#) following the decision to cancel examinations from February through to the end of the year.

Qualifications that include occupational competency, licence to practice, professional and continuing professional development qualifications, and some other Ofqual regulated vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) not typically used to support progression will not be eligible for a teacher assessed grade, and assessment should continue.

For these qualifications, we have made further assessment and qualification level adaptations, which are detailed below, and centres can take advantage of these to continue assessment for their learners.

Qualifications that are primarily taught alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A Levels – including vocational qualifications which are important for progression to further study or employment, can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade.

For these qualifications, centres should continue teaching and learning, but where an assessment cannot be completed, a centre can submit a formal judgement of learner attainment against the requirements of a given assessment.

Following the publication of the Vocational and Technical Qualifications Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF) in March 2021, this guidance has been updated to include further guidance for centres on teacher assessed grades, and more detail relating to special considerations, results release, and appeals. Updates to this version are highlighted and documented in the version control section.

Introduction

Since the spring of 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic has caused substantial disruption to teaching, learning and assessment activity in all parts of the education sector. Throughout this time, we have done as much as we can to support centres in mitigating the impact of the pandemic on learners' attainment, certification, and progression.

Autumn 2020 adaptations

In October 2020 Ofqual published the [Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework \(EERF\)](#). The EERF gave awarding organisations like NCFE flexibility to adapt assessments to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic on centres and learners.

In October 2020 we published an [adaptation blueprint](#), summarising how we would adapt each of our main assessment types; we applied the blueprint to each of the qualifications in our portfolio and published an 'adaptation addenda' for each one on [QualHub](#).

Spring 2021 developments

At the beginning of January 2021, Government decided to close schools and colleges – and took the view that it is not viable for external exams to go ahead for some Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs). On 15 January 2021, [Ofqual launched a consultation](#) on alternative awarding arrangements given the impact of the pandemic on centres and learners – and the decision to cancel exams.

On 25 February 2021, [Ofqual published the outcome of the consultation](#) – confirming that:

- qualifications that are most similar to GCSEs, AS, A Levels and are important for progression to further study, higher education, or employment, can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade, i.e. previously prescribed assessments may be replaced with a teacher assessed grade where those assessments have not been completed due to, for example, the cancellation of exams
- qualifications that are used to enter directly into employment will not be awarded through a teacher assessed grade because it is not possible to award these qualifications safely, reliably, and validly without the knowledge, skills, and behaviours having been demonstrated and assessed. They will continue to be assessed in the manner prescribed for each qualification by the awarding organisation – including whatever adaptations have been made to mitigate the impact of the pandemic
- qualifications that are smaller and taken for mixed purposes (e.g. not like GCSE or A Levels in their structure, such as Functional Skills, Skills for Life), will continue remotely, or in person, in line with public health measures. These can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade only where assessments cannot take place on public health grounds, or remotely. For Functional Skills qualifications, we have worked closely with Ofqual and the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) to develop a common approach to determine when a learner can be awarded a qualification through a teacher assessed grade and more information can be found on the Functional Skills page of our [website here](#).

Having confirmed the overall position, Ofqual then consulted awarding organisations on the technical and regulatory changes required to support their approach.

Ofqual has now published the Vocational and Technical Qualifications Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF), which sets out the regulatory requirements for vocational and technical qualifications awarding. This includes requirements relating to:

- the overall approach to awarding
- the categorisation of qualifications
- the application, interpretation, and definitions of regulatory requirements for awarding
- the adaptation of qualifications that can or can not be awarded through a teacher assessed grade
- the determination of results awarded through a teacher assessed grade
- the principles to be applied by awarding organisations for adaptations and teacher assessed grades.

Purpose of this document

This document, originally published on 25 February 2021 and updated on 27 May, sets out NCFE's approach to awarding for the remainder of 2020–21 in light of both consultation outcomes. It confirms which of our qualifications fall in and out of scope for the alternative teacher assessment arrangements that Ofqual has described – and our approach for each.

Ofqual consultation on alternative awarding arrangements

The Ofqual consultation launched on 15 January 2021 and closed for responses on 29 January 2021. NCFE actively contributed to the consultation exercise – providing a formal response and engaging in a variety of consultation-related discussions with Ofqual and other sector partners.

Ofqual published the outcome of the consultation on 25 February 2021, confirming the alternative arrangements that it would put in place for the remainder of the 2020–21 session:

- Ofqual recognises the difficulty of achieving comparison against previous years and with other awarding organisations, given the challenges from last year. They have therefore stated that performance standards for vocational and technical qualifications should be broadly the same as in previous years, maintaining standards, as far as possible, within the same qualification in line with previous years.
- It is not possible to adopt a 'one size fits all' approach to assessment and awarding through the remainder of the session, given the substantial differences that exist between GCSEs and A Levels and vocational and technical qualifications.
- Qualifications that are most similar to GCSEs, AS, and A Levels and are important for progression to further study or employment, can now be awarded through a teacher assessed grade, i.e. previously prescribed assessments may be replaced with a teacher assessed grade where those assessments have not been completed due to, for example, the cancellation of exams. It is government policy that it is no longer viable that exams for these qualifications go ahead.
- Awarding organisations should be afforded flexibility in how they determine their approach to teacher assessed grading and their conditions for minimum evidence requirements.
- Qualifications for which it is not possible to award safely, reliably, and validly without the knowledge, skills, and behaviours being demonstrated and assessed, can not be awarded through a teacher assessed grade. These qualifications will continue to be assessed in the manner prescribed for each qualification by the awarding organisation

- including whatever adaptations have been made to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.
- Where required, exams will continue to be made available for qualifications that can not be awarded through a teacher assessed grade.
- Qualifications that are taken for mixed purposes that are unlike GCSEs and A Levels in their structure, such as Functional Skills and Skills for Life qualifications, will continue with exams and assessments still made available. These can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade only where assessments can not take place on public health grounds, or remotely. For Functional Skills qualifications, we have worked closely with Ofqual and the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) to develop a common approach to determine when a learner can be awarded a qualification through a teacher assessed grade and more information can be found on the Functional Skills page of our [website here](#).
- Learners with previously banked or completed internal or external assessments, including those who completed an exam in January 2021, are still eligible for a teacher assessed grade this session where the qualification permits it.
- Learners eligible for teacher assessed grades, where applicable, are defined as those expecting to complete an assessment between 01 August 2020 and 31 August 2021.
- There is a subset of qualifications that can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade – those most closely aligned to GCSEs and A Levels – where further work with Ofqual and other awarding organisations is needed before finalising a shared approach. This includes Applied Generals, T Levels and V Certs and other performance table qualifications. This work has now been completed and the respective approaches can be found in the qualification adaptation addenda on the qualification pages on our [Qualhub website](#).

We will continue to communicate with you in the coming weeks to provide more advice, guidance, and support as you continue to deliver teaching, learning and assessment activity. We will do this through our weekly Covid-19 communication emails, website updates, our EQA team, and regular webinars. We understand that you need as much clarity as possible from us at every stage and we will continue to provide this.

Our response to the outcome of the consultation

Our overall approach

Throughout the current session, we have looked to do everything we can to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on centres and your learners. We appreciate that the pandemic has caused acute, unprecedented challenges for you and want to do everything we can to help. Four principles have driven our response to the pandemic.

- **Supporting learning progress:** in looking at our qualifications, assessment methods and the wider support we offer we have focussed relentlessly on how we can support learners' achievement and progression in spite of the pandemic.
- **Maintaining rigour and robustness:** particularly in the current circumstances, we understand the importance of rigour, robustness and maintaining the validity of our qualifications as validation of learners' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- **Streamlining and supporting centres:** we appreciate that centres and your staff are working in acute circumstances to support your learners – so we need to help you by

- making our awarding arrangements as simple and streamlined as possible, and by providing you with exceptional support and customer service.
- **Working in partnership for the benefit of learners:** the current context demands that partners across the sector work proactively and effectively together in support of centres and your learners; we've done that throughout by working with other awarding organisations and sector partners to consider particular adaptations.

These principles shaped the changes we made to our qualifications, assessments, and operational processes in the autumn – and the further adaptations and new arrangements described in this document.

As noted above, a crucial outcome of the Ofqual consultation is the use of teacher assessed grades for some qualifications. Ofqual has confirmed that qualifications can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade where they share some key characteristics with GCSEs, AS, A Levels and are important for progression to further study or employment.

Where qualifications can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade – and not all assessment has been completed – centres may offer a grade that reflects each learners' current level of performance for that assessment, demonstrated through the collation of a range of evidence and alternative assessment methods, in line with our guidance.

Ofqual has deemed that a teacher assessed grade is not appropriate for all qualifications, i.e. those not possible to award safely, reliably, and validly without the knowledge, skills, and behaviours being demonstrated and assessed – including occupational qualifications, licence to practice and other VTQs not used for progression.

For these qualifications, we have taken full advantage of the flexibilities available to us this year to review qualifications and remove content wherever we can do so without compromising the purpose and integrity of the qualification.

You will be aware that in the autumn, we substantially adapted many of our assessment methods to help centres mitigate the impact of the pandemic on learners. Given additional flexibilities now afforded to us by Ofqual, we have also revisited our qualifications in line with these new flexibilities available and substantially reviewed qualification content and removed requirements where we can.

The rest of this document provides more advice and guidance for centres on our approach to assessment and awarding for the rest of the year – both for qualifications that may now be awarded based on teacher assessed grades, and those which may not.

Qualifications which can not be awarded through a teacher assessed grade

Which qualifications can not be awarded through a teacher assessed grade?

Category A qualifications

Ofqual's expectation is that teacher assessed grades should not be used to award qualifications where it is not possible to award safely, reliably, and validly if the knowledge, skills, and behaviours have not been demonstrated and assessed.

This includes most occupational, licence to practice, professional and continuing professional development qualifications, and some other Ofqual-regulated vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) that are not typically used to support progression.

We have reviewed our portfolio of qualifications against the criteria which Ofqual has set out, and produced a list of qualifications that can and can not be awarded through a teacher assessed grade – [which you can find here](#).

How have these qualifications been adapted to support centres and learners?

As you will be aware, in the autumn we substantially reviewed our qualification portfolio and substantially adapted many of our assessment methods to help centres mitigate the impact of the pandemic on learners.

Given additional flexibilities now afforded to us by Ofqual, we have now completed a further review of qualifications that can not be awarded through a teacher assessed grade and, wherever we could do so without undermining the purpose or validity of the qualification, have removed qualification content to make it easier for centres and learners to complete the whole qualification. We have done this at qualification level by:

- reducing the rule of combination; and/or
- removing learning outcome/assessment criteria.

Where appropriate, we have consulted industry sector partners before adapting qualification content in this way – given the importance of maintaining the value of the qualification to learners as they look to progress in their chosen occupation.

How has assessment of these qualifications been adapted?

As above, we substantially reviewed our approach to assessment in the autumn. In doing that, we took full advantage of all flexibilities available to us under the EERF. As such, there are very few further changes that we can make at this point (spring 2021), notwithstanding:

- removing assessment requirements that relate to qualification content we have removed through our consideration of qualification adaptations (above)
- noting the introduction of our remote invigilation offer, through which Functional Skills qualifications may be assessed anytime, anywhere, online
- providing additional guidance on the observation of competence in the workplace or through a mandatory work placement.

A summary of the assessment adaptations we have applied to our qualifications, including both the adaptations we applied in autumn and any supplementary changes we have been able to make in spring 2021, can be found within the blueprint in annex A of this document.

The position for each qualification is confirmed in the updated adaptation addenda which can be found on [QualHub](#).

How will these qualifications be awarded?

These qualifications will be awarded on the basis that assessments must still take, or have already taken place. The adaptations outlined above are designed to use all flexibilities available to us to support learners to complete their course and qualification.

Where the qualification has been adapted to reduce assessment requirement, and therefore the rule of combination for qualification achievement, it will be confirmed in the qualification addenda. We have updated our Portal to reflect these changes, and you can claim certificates using this reduced rule of combination.

Where learners cannot complete a given assessment, they may meet the requirements for special consideration, although Ofqual has confirmed that special considerations will not apply to learners who are not able to sit assessments because they have not been taught qualification content.

We have reviewed our special consideration policy to ensure that it best supports centres and learners in a pandemic context. Further detail is provided below, and we have now published a policy in line with all available technical and regulatory requirements.

Where learners are not able to complete assessment activity prescribed in the updated adaptation addenda – and are not eligible for special consideration – centres may judge it necessary to delay learners' completion of their course until all requirements can be met.

Qualifications which can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade

Which qualifications can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade?

Category B1 qualifications

Ofqual's expectation is that teacher assessed grades should be used to award qualifications that are primarily taught alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A Levels – including vocational qualifications that are important for progression to further study or employment.

Category B2 qualifications

Qualifications that are not like GCSE or A Levels in their structure, such as Functional Skills and Skills for Life, will continue remotely. They can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade only where assessments cannot take place on public health grounds or remotely.

For Functional Skills qualifications, we have worked closely with Ofqual and the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) to develop a common approach to determine when a learner can be awarded a qualification through a teacher assessed grade and more information can be found on the Functional Skills page of our [website here](#).

We have reviewed our portfolio of qualifications against the criteria that Ofqual has set out, and produced a list of qualifications that will and will not be awarded through a teacher assessed grade – [which you can find here](#).

How will these qualifications be awarded?

These qualifications will be awarded on the basis that, where the required assessments have not all been completed, a teacher assessed grade may be provided – subject to the approach and requirements we set out, and in line with Ofqual technical and regulatory guidance.

Where a learner has already banked achievement, for either internal or external assessment, this can be retained for awarding and no teacher assessed grade is required. However, had your learners planned on completing this assessment again within the applicable time period, a teacher assessed grade can still be submitted.

Within the group of qualifications that can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade, there was a small number – those most closely aligned to GCSEs and A Levels – in relation to which we needed to do some further work with Ofqual and others before finalising a shared approach. This includes Core Mathematics, T Levels and Functional Skills qualifications. This work has now been completed and all qualification-specific detail is published in each qualification adaptation addenda, available on our [QualHub website](#).

For Functional Skills qualifications, we have worked closely with Ofqual and the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) to develop a common approach to determine when a learner can be awarded a qualification through a teacher assessed grade and more information can be found on the Functional Skills page of our [website here](#).

Teacher assessed grades

How will a teacher assessed grade work?

- Teacher assessed grades will be submitted at assessment level. Submitting teacher assessed grades at assessment level will allow existing qualification aggregation to continue, supporting mid-flight learners, and also those who may wish to improve their assessment grade in a future assessment opportunity.
- Teacher assessed grades should be offered only where it is not possible for an assessment to be completed. Where learners can complete assessments prescribed in adaptation addenda, they should do so.
- Existing banked achievement can be used to certificate.
- Where a teacher assessed grade is offered, it must be considered with reference to the purpose of the qualification and associated achievement criteria – such that where learners are awarded a given qualification, they have attained at that level.
- We will allow centres to collate and consider a wide variety of evidence, and types of evidence, to support the teacher assessed grades they offer to us. We understand the context in which centres are operating, so do not believe it helpful or realistic for us to set strict, prescriptive evidence requirements: rather, we will empower centres and teachers.
- Through our normal channels, will conduct substantive external quality assurance on teacher assessed grades to ensure consistency and compliance with the requirements

we set out. In doing this, we will assure the process through which centres have determined grades – and the evidence you have collated to underpin them.

- We will provide support and guidance to centres throughout this process, working with them in mitigating the impact of the pandemic on learners' attainment, certification and progression.
- The below guidance is general – please check qualification specific adaptation addenda for further qualification specific guidance where available.

What is a teacher assessed grade?

A teacher assessed grade is a formal judgement of learner attainment against the requirements of a given assessment, offered by a centre where it has not been possible for the learner to complete the assessment that would usually be required.

A teacher assessed grade should:

- be based on as much teaching, learning and assessment activity as possible
- only be offered where learners cannot complete prescribed assessments e.g. because exams or other forms of assessment have not been completed
- represent a holistic view of learner attainment, offered by centres and teachers based on teaching, learning and assessment activity that has been completed
- be supported by substantial evidence of learner attainment collated by learners, teachers and centres with reference to our minimum requirements (see below)
- be offered to us with respect to each assessment that would normally form part of the qualification requirement, where the assessment has not been completed.

A teacher assessed grade should not:

- be offered in the absence of teaching, learning and assessment activity
- represent centres' and teachers' view of how a given learner would have performed if cancelled exams and other assessments had gone ahead
- represent centres' and teachers' view of how a given learner has the potential to perform or might perform in the future
- represent centres' and teachers' views of how a learner may have performed had the pandemic not impacted their course.

To ensure that teacher assessed grades are accurate, valid and evidenced, centres must:

- continue with teaching and learning as far and as long as possible in the remainder of the 2020–21 session before formulating a teacher assessed grade; and
- assess learners against the purpose of the qualification and achievement criteria set out for the relevant qualification.

Centres should note that we have not made at this point, and do not intend to make, any further adaptations to qualification content or assessment requirements for qualifications that can be awarded through a teacher assessed grade; we do not envisage that the requirements set out in qualification addenda available on QualHub will change between now and year-end.

Guidance on grading for teachers

Centres must review the situation of their learners to identify where a teacher assessed grade may be required, as soon as possible. Centres should identify which assessment components have already been completed and banked, which are partially complete or where a resit may have been planned, and which are yet to begin. From this point, a centre can then begin to plan ahead to ensure that no outstanding assessment gaps will remain once all teacher assessed grades have been submitted and aggregated alongside existing banked evidence.

Remember - existing qualification aggregation remains in place, therefore **a certificating learner will require a result against each required assessment component** in order to achieve the qualification overall. This can be from a teacher assessed grade, banked results already achieved, or results achieved through normal assessment activity that can continue.

Teachers can then begin to consider the requirements to determine a grade. To determine a grade, teachers will make a judgement based on the evidence of the learner's performance in the subject and assessment component. The evidence used can be different types, can come from across the course of study for the qualification and should cover a breadth of content. While we are not asking for quantitative measures of coverage or Guided Learning Hours (GLH) as evidence, we advise that centres should consider the breadth of evidence across all units when submitting teacher assessed grades, and the following stages in this section will explain this in further detail.

This guidance will support you in thinking about the different factors to take into account when making your teacher assessed grade judgement. You may find going through the following stages helpful when making your grading decisions.

Stage 1: Consider what has been taught

Look at the overall structure of the qualification specification and consider:

- what has been taught for the assessment component in question?
- what has been taught for the rest of the qualification specification?
- what has not been taught to this cohort because of the impact of the pandemic?
- what work have learners done within this content that represents their attainment?
- has the content taught to this cohort been covered deeply or superficially?

The evidence used to make the judgement should only include assessment of content that has been taught and not consider what the learner might be capable of.

Stage 2: Collect the evidence

Consider what evidence has been collected across the course of the learners' performance. The Department for Education has produced guidance on recommended evidence, which [can be found here](#). For ease of reference, the section describing types of evidence is reproduced below:

Types of evidence

- Learner work produced in response to assessment materials provided by the exam board, including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials such as practice or sample papers.
- Banked components already completed (i.e. external assessments or internal assessments already external quality assured).

- Completed but not external quality assured, or partially completed internal assessments.
- Learner work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the qualification specification, that could be used to reflect performance at a grade – this can include:
 - substantial class or homework (including those that took place during remote learning)
 - internal tests or practice assessments taken by learners
 - project work
 - recordings (e.g. of practical performance)
 - evidence from work experience/placement where relevant to the qualification
 - tracker of achievement and attainment over the course when used in conjunction with other forms of evidence (this cannot be used in isolation, as by itself it would not support QA/appeal review)
- witness testimonies or teacher observation records when used in conjunction with other forms of evidence.

Centres should include evidence that assesses the learner's ability across a representative range of subject content and across the different learning outcomes. There are no additional restrictions on the number of pieces of evidence, or number of different types of evidence.

If there is no evidence for the component in question, or the evidence does not represent a learner's achievement in the subject, then the first action should be to prioritise delivering elements of that component and collect further evidence of learner attainment.

It is not necessary for every aspect of the components or specification to be assessed to arrive at a grade. Aim to include evidence that assesses the learner's ability across a reasonable range of subject content reflecting, where possible, all learning outcomes. Consider whether the evidence available is sufficient to support your judgement. If not, what additional assessment might be needed? Could further assessment evidence supplement or help to confirm performance of previous assessments?

If a learner has studied with other educational providers or an external or private tutor during the course, any evidence available from those sources can be used if the teacher is confident that it is authentic, produced by the learner, and relevant to the qualification. The evidence **must** relate to the qualification and qualification specification being assessed.

At least part of the evidence **must** be actual concrete learner work (i.e. in a form that can be reviewed by others such as written work or audio/visual recordings), in order that sampling as a part of external quality assurance could take place if required. It may also be required to be reviewed as part of potential appeals.

There **must** be at least some evidence of performance at the grade being submitted for the teacher assessed grade. There is no requirement for any units to have been fully taught or assessed.

Ideally, the evidence used will be consistent across the class or cohort, but that may not always be possible where a learner has missed some teaching or has missed one or more assessments. Make sure details of what evidence will be used has been communicated to each learner and that they have understood. Therefore, if there are any discrepancies between a learner and the rest of their cohort in what has been taught, this should become apparent before decisions are finalised.

While there is no set requirement for the minimum amount of content that learners must have been taught, heads of centres will have to confirm that learners have been taught sufficient content to allow progression to the next stage of their education. It would be helpful, therefore, for the evidence to illustrate this.

Stage 3: Evaluate the quality of the evidence

When considering how useful the evidence is in determining the grade, consider the following factors:

- coverage of assessment objectives
- coverage of content
- authenticity – How confident is the teacher that it is the learner's own work? Where this includes group work, the teacher must be confident about the learner's own contribution
- level of control – was it taken in timed conditions? Was there an opportunity for redrafting? Was it supervised?
- when the evidence was produced
- marking – how much support was available to help you in applying the mark scheme? What internal standardisation processes have been applied?
- more recent evidence may be more representative of candidates' current performance, however, teachers will need to consider the context in which the work was created, e.g. a January 2021 external assessment completed when a candidate felt ill or was disrupted due to school/college closures could be less representative than a piece of homework from earlier in the course completed when they were well and prepared
- where there is banked evidence, this should be considered. Teacher assessed grades may be a higher grade than the banked evidence where there is more recent or reliable evidence of higher attainment. A learner may receive a teacher assessed grade that is higher than the grades in their completed components, if there is evidence of higher achievement
- what learners were asked to do: centres should aim to use consistent sources of evidence for a class or cohort that relate closely to the specification requirements
- how the evidence was produced e.g. a mock exam with support vs a mock exam in exam conditions
- there is no set hierarchy of evidence and teachers should weight the evidence they believe to be the most representative of candidates' achievements.

Consider also the context each piece was completed in. If you know that a learner completed an assessment when they were unwell or working in a noisy home environment, for example, you should consider whether it is a fair reflection of the learner's performance. If you think a learner could do better, consider what other evidence might present a fairer reflection of their attainment to support a higher teacher assessed grade.

While there is no one type of evidence that takes precedence, evidence that you believe is an authentic representation of the learner's performance will give confidence in the judgement.

Stage 4: Establish if the available evidence covers everything the student has learned

You should only grade each learner on their performance in the subject content that they have evidence for. Although, as there are distinct and separate components of content in the courses, it is likely that content will overlap, and a piece of evidence may be used for multiple components.

For example, in our [Level 3 Uniformed Services](#) qualification, there are the following 2 components titled:

- Skills for land-based outdoor and adventurous activities
- Skills for water-based outdoor and adventurous activities

In both components above, the learner undertakes a risk assessment in the different contexts of each assessment, however, what is being assessed is the learners' performance to be able to undertake a risk assessment. Therefore, where evidence of achievement has been demonstrated in one assessment component, this evidence could also be used to support evidence of performance in the other assessment component.

Stage 5: Assign the grade

Grades should be based on a holistic judgement of the evidence of the learner's performance on the subject content they have been taught and how this relates to the assessment where the teacher assessed grade is required. Look at the quality of the work you have collected and use the sources of support available to help you reach a final grade for each relevant assessment teacher assessed grade. This will include your professional experience of the assessment materials used, as well as the grade descriptors and exemplification available.

Remember that the grade assigned must be based on learner's performance in the evidence you have collected. You should not factor in the learner's potential. For example, if all the evidence collated is of a merit grade standard, there would be no reason to consider awarding that learner a distinction grade. It should be no easier or harder for a learner to achieve a grade based on their performance than in previous years.

Reflect on your judgement. Referring to the Ofqual guidance on avoiding conscious or unconscious bias or discrimination can support you in making a more objective judgement. Grades may then be adjusted as part of the school or college's quality assurance processes, including internal standardisation arrangements.

Ideally the evidence used will be consistent across the class or cohort, however, where a learner has been absent for an extended period and unable to access teaching and/or an assessment, that might not be possible.

Reminders about grading

- Reasonable adjustments for disabled learners and access arrangements should have been in place when evidence was generated. Where they were not, centres should take that into account when coming to their judgement. Where appropriate, this should include input from appropriate specialist teachers and other professionals.
- In the event that a learner is unable to take an assessment or suffers a traumatic event that might affect their performance, special consideration requests will not apply for category B qualifications this summer because learners will not be taking their exams. However, where illness or other personal circumstances might have temporarily

affected performance, for example in mock exams, centres should bear that in mind when making their judgements.

Teacher assessed grade scenarios

No single type of evidence is recommended above any other, however it is expected that you will take into account contextual factors when determining how much notional weight to assign to each piece.

The following are some examples of scenarios centres may consider, and guidance on how the principles and process described above might be applied in practice.

The learner intended to complete an external assessment that has been cancelled, but there is also an internally assessed component which covers the same unit content.

Centres can use the evidence from the internal assessment, whether this is banked and completed or partially completed to inform a teacher assessed grade for the external assessment component.

The learner intended to complete an external assessment that has been cancelled and there are no internally assessed components which cover the same content.

Centres should look to evidence performance at a grade through other sources of evidence, such as:

- past papers/practice assessments
- homework or classwork
- project work
- evidence from work experience/placement if applicable
- witness testimonies or teacher observation records when used in conjunction with other forms of evidence
- evidence from completed synoptic assessments, which may sample across multiple units
- centre devised assessments
- formative assessments.

At least one internal assessment component has only been partially completed.

Where an internal assessment is partially completed, the teacher should:

- continue teaching and learning for all internal assessment in the time remaining this session
- make a judgement to confirm if the partially completed evidence is sufficient to evidence performance, and therefore enable them to submit a teacher assessed grade. This does not require all content to have been completed
- attempts should be made to fill any gaps with other sources of evidence, where there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement.

At least one assessment component has not been taught.

Ofqual's policy is that internal assessment should continue where possible and could be used to generate evidence for teacher assessed grades. Centres should focus on identifying in advance which internally assessed components are yet to be taught, and plan to address this in

the time remaining. Centres should identify any potential assessments where evidence may be lacking as soon as possible, and make every effort to generate sufficient evidence in the time remaining, through continued teaching, learning, and assessment, to allow for a teacher assessed grade to be submitted. If a teacher assessed grade is not determined for any assessment component, then the qualification cannot be awarded. If you are concerned you will not be able to produce any evidence at all for an assessment component, you should contact your allocated EQA at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss other options for evidence in the remaining timeframe.

Where it is not possible to produce additional evidence for an assessment component in the timescales available, sufficient evidence can be drawn from different sources and evidence types from across the qualification as a whole, where applicable. Centres can use an existing banked achievement, or evidence from other assessments, and map it to the required content if related. This allows an inference to be made about the learner's skills or knowledge for the requirements of the teacher assessed grade in question.

For example, a learner is completing the NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Food and Cookery Skills and there is not sufficient time to generate evidence for the required internal assessment for unit 4 (plan and produce dishes in response to a brief). In this example, evidence from the other three units can be used to make judgements about the learner's performance in the required assessment for unit 4.

- Unit 1 contains the learning outcome: 'Describe safe and hygienic working practices to prepare the cooking environment'. Evidence from this learning outcome can be used to infer achievement of learning outcome 2.4 from unit 4, which is 'Demonstrate safe and hygienic working practices'.
- Unit 2 has the learning outcome 'Evaluate the dish' and evidence of achievement of this learning outcome could be used to infer achievement of learning outcome 3.3 from unit 4, 'Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the dish'.

This demonstrates how a centre could, using existing evidence from elsewhere within the qualification, judge performance in the content of the required assessment of unit 4, contributing to the generation of a teacher assessed grade without making a prediction of learner potential. The judgement is based on evidence of the learner using the relevant skills and knowledge assessed elsewhere.

We will not accept teacher assessed grades where there is little or no evidence in which to base a holistic judgement of performance at a grade. For further guidance on making effective judgements to support awarding in 2021, please ensure you consult the available [Ofqual guidance document on this subject](#).

Mid-flight learners and banked results

Learners are eligible for a teacher assessed grade for any assessment they were intending to complete during the applicable time period of 01 August 2020 and 31 August 2021, whether they are in their year of certification, or mid-flight (certificating in 2021–22 or beyond).

Existing banked results (including those received through a centre assessed grade (CAG) in summer 2020) can be used to certificate in 2020–21. This means that banked outcomes from

external assessments can be combined with existing, or yet to be submitted results from internal assessments, including those arrived at through a teacher assessed grade.

Existing qualification aggregation remains in place for awarding in 2020–21, therefore a result will be required against all qualification assessment components (whether internal or external) in order to achieve the qualification overall. This can be either through teacher assessed grades, non-teacher assessed grades, or a combination of the two.

Learners who were intending to improve an existing banked result within the applicable period through a resit, including those received through a CAG in summer 2020, are eligible for a teacher assessed grade.

Information on how to submit teacher assessed grades through our Portal is available in our updated Portal User Guide, on our [website here](#).

Quality assurance of teacher assessed grades

As centres will be aware, we already operate robust external quality assurance arrangements that help us ensure the robustness, fairness and validity of the qualifications we award – and centres' compliance with the requirements we set out.

We will continue to operate external quality assurance arrangements through the remainder of the current session – and have adapted our approach to support centres and teachers as you prepare and submit teacher assessed grades to us.

Our approach to quality assurance is summarised in the table below with a comprehensive external quality assurance policy published on our website, covering each step and more in further detail.

Step 1	Confirmation of teacher assessed grading strategy by each centre You must complete a teacher assessed grading strategy before you can submit any TAGs on our portal. To do this you must complete this form, the deadline for this has now passed so please complete this as soon as possible. This form asks centres to answer a series of questions to gain clarification and confidence in the way in which you will prepare, collate evidence for and submit teacher assessed grades to us – including for example how you will conduct internal quality assurance. We have aligned to other awarding organisations as far as possible. If you have produced a Teacher Assessed Grading Policy for your General Qualification (GQ) awarding organisation, you will be asked to confirm this within the form and may be asked to submit this as additional evidence to support your strategy. This form will also include your Head of Centre (HoC) declaration which needs to be agreed, signed, and dated prior to any teacher assessed grades being submitted. This form declares that all practices outlined in the strategy will be followed throughout the teacher assessed grading process.
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<p>Step 2</p>	<p>Focussed review of centres' teacher assessed grading strategy</p> <p>Once you have submitted your teacher assessed grading strategy to us, we will review it against our and Ofqual's requirements. We will provide centres with feedback and additional guidance within 5 working days to ensure that your approach is compliant.</p> <p><u>You should not submit teacher assessed grades to us until we have confirmed that we have approved your strategy and HoC declaration.</u></p>
<p>Step 3</p>	<p>EQA preparation, advice and support to centres</p> <p>EQA activity will continue largely as planned through the spring and summer term, with EQAs supporting, advising and challenging centres on your approach to, and the evidence you are preparing to support, teacher assessed grades before – and after – submission to us.</p> <p>We have invested in additional EQA resource to ensure that centres can access the support you need to prepare valid teacher assessed grades for your learners.</p>
<p>Step 4</p>	<p>Centre submission of grades to NCFE</p> <p>We have made changes to our Portal that will enable you to submit teacher assessed grades to us; unlike last year, you are able to submit grades through our main portal rather than a separate one.</p> <p>The submission of grades during the teacher assessed grade window will also include those that are a mid-flight learner, fail or not yet achieved (NYA).</p> <p>You should not submit teacher assessed grades to us until you have had your centres TAG strategy approved.</p>
<p>Step 5</p>	<p>Post teacher assessed grade submission EQA review</p> <p>In addition, our external quality assurance team will also complete risk-based reviews of grades submitted by centres. As a result of these desk-based reviews we may require further information or engagement with you before confirming learner results.</p> <p>As ever, we will reserve the right to conduct formal investigations where we are concerned about a given centre's practice – and may hold results whilst we do so.</p>

Step 6	Continued EQA activity into 2021–22 Centres in line with current Ofqual guidance are required to keep all evidence used in the determination of a teacher assessed grade until 6 months after either the results issue date, or the conclusion of any appeal in relation to that result, whichever is later. This evidence may be required as part of EQA sampling during 2021–22. Where we identify concerns, we continue to reserve the right to conduct formal investigations and to withdraw certifications if necessary. Please refer to our Malpractice Policy for more information.
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Reasonable adjustments and equalities considerations

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, or other relevant staff within a centre, must continue learner testing and assessment to ensure learners receive the reasonable adjustments or access arrangements for which they are eligible. Every effort must be made to ensure that learners receive the correct access arrangements and reasonable adjustments for all arrangements that are put in place to determine teacher assessed grades.

This applies to all assessment activity that may take place within the centre, whether teacher designed tasks, completing past papers, or any other activity where a learner would require any access arrangement or reasonable adjustments.

A record must be kept within the centre confirming adjustments were in place and were used when determining a teacher assessed grade for a learner, and this must be held securely until at least the published deadline for appeals, and shared with NCFE where requested.

Where external assessment continues, centres must continue to follow the NCFE guidance on notifying us of reasonable adjustments and access arrangements.

Special considerations

A special consideration is intended for learners who have been fully prepared, and covered all required content for an assessment, but temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances have impacted on the learner's ability to demonstrate their usual level of attainment at the time of the assessment.

Where external assessments have been cancelled, our usual Special Consideration process will not apply. Instead, as the range of evidence to support the judgement of a teacher assessed grade is flexible, and can be tailored to an individual learner, centres should be able to collate and select evidence completed by a learner when they were not temporarily affected by adverse circumstances.

Where this is not possible, and the temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances has affected the learner's provision of evidence used to determine the teacher assessed grade, teachers should take this into account when finalising their grading judgements. The decision and rationale should then be documented.

Centres can consult our [Special Considerations Policy](#) to see examples of circumstances they could consider, and the possible allowances they may wish to apply. When applying judgement, it must be remembered that special considerations **cannot** be applied due to lost teaching or learning, and **cannot** be applied cumulatively.

Centres must be satisfied that the issue or event has had or would be reasonably likely to have had an impact on the learners ability to demonstrate their usual level of attainment. Centres must be able to record how they determined this impact in their grading decision, for review by NCFE if requested.

For qualifications which can not be awarded through a teacher assessed grade, our existing [Special Considerations Policy](#) will still apply where relevant. However, the type of assessment and existing adaptations must first be considered.

For internal assessment, centres must consider a delay, and fully investigate all possible adaptations available, as detailed within the qualification specific adaptation addenda [available on our website](#).

The arrangements introduced under the vocational contingency regulatory framework for alternative awarding arrangements are intended to mitigate the impact of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. **Therefore, a special consideration is not intended for learners who have missed teaching and learning as a consequence of public health guidance.**
January 2021 exams

Where exams went ahead in January 2021, centres can submit a teacher assessed grade (where eligible) for both certificating and mid-flight learners who:

- were absent from the exam
- completed the exam but found that their ability to demonstrate their level of attainment was adversely impacted by completing in the context of the disruption in January.

In both of these scenarios, no special consideration need be submitted.

Results and post-results

Sharing teacher assessed grades with learners prior to results release

Centres must ensure learners are aware of their teacher assessed grading approach, and that learners understand what evidence is being used to determine the teacher assessed grade being submitted for them, including the outcome of individual pieces of evidence within that.

Centres must also ensure learners are aware in advance of results release of instances where no teacher assessed grade has been submitted for them, when they may have reasonably expected that one would have.

However, centres must not share with learners the overall teacher assessed grades before confirmed results are released.

Results release dates

18 June is the deadline for Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) submissions if you want to guarantee your learners' B1 qualifications results for week commencing 9 August. This is to enable us to do the necessary quality assurance in time to release timely, valid results. However, for B1 qualifications that do not require a TAG, you have until 30 July to make your claims, which we hope will help you in terms of giving you additional teaching time.

Level 3 B1 NCFE qualifications

- Results will be released to centres no later than **Monday 9 August 2021**.
- Learners will receive their results on **Tuesday 10 August 2021**.

Entry level to Level 2 B1 NCFE qualifications

- Results will be released to centres no later than **Wednesday 11 August 2021**.
- Learners will receive their results on **Thursday 12 August 2021**.

B2 NCFE qualifications

TAG results for B2 qualifications will be released on a rolling basis until the end of August 2021, aligned with teacher assessed grade submissions.

Post-results enquiries and appeals

Where results are issued through a teacher assessed grade, our existing post-results services will not be applicable. Therefore, we will be publishing further details in the coming weeks to support centres in possible post-results services and options, which will include resolution of administrative issues with the submission of a teacher assessed grade, and our policy on appeals.

In advance of publishing our policy, key details of our appeals policy are published below, to allow learners and centres to understand the options available to them once results are released, and begin to consider how these can be implemented, where needed. It is important for centres to ensure their internal teacher assessed grading strategy is comprehensive, to support with any potential appeals they may later receive from their learners.

Appeal grounds

The need for appeals should be limited as learners should be confident in their grades because centres will have:

- an effective teacher assessed grade strategy that is adhered to by all centre staff involved in the determination of teacher assessed grades
- a high standard of internal quality assurance both in determining teacher assessed grades based only on student evidence and ensuring that there are no administrative or procedural errors
- effective provision of reasonable adjustments and access arrangements for all eligible students
- effective arrangements for learners that may have been disadvantaged during an assessment that contributes to their grade either by using student evidence that was

- unaffected by the adverse circumstances or, if that is not possible, taking this into account when determining the teacher assessed grade for the learner
- accurate recording and effective checking of information to avoid errors in submitting teacher assessed grades
 - effective oversight and clear professional accountability from the Head of Centre who will complete the Head of Centre declaration
 - clear communication with learners regarding the appeals process and the need for student consent as grades could go down, up or stay the same.

However, an appeal process will be made available and an appeal can be submitted in instances where a learner or centre believes a result received is incorrect, due to a procedural or administrative error by either the centre or NCFE. Learners who believe that an error has been made in determining their grade will also have the right to appeal.

All appeals must follow a two-stage process of centre review initially, followed by submission to NCFE.

Centre review

All appeals must first be reviewed by the centre. Every centre must have in place an internal appeals policy and/or procedure, made available to learners, that allows a learner to review the result of the teacher assessed grade on the grounds that either the centre did not follow its internal teacher assessed grade policy correctly, or made an administrative error when submitting the teacher assessed grade to NCFE.

This policy must be made available for NCFE upon review if required and must be followed by learners and centres as a first stage, before contacting NCFE.

NCFE review

Where a centre has reviewed an appeal received by a learner and believes that it has identified a procedural or administrative error which requires amendment, they can then contact NCFE. We will review the evidence provided and will decide whether or not to amend the learner's result.

Where a learner has first approached their centre, and the centre either has not heard their appeal, that the centre has no process for the learner to appeal, or where the learner can evidence that the centre have made an unrealistic academic judgement in formulating their teacher assessed grade, they can then approach NCFE.

If accepted, NCFE will begin a process of review of all available evidence, including all centre policies and procedures, to determine whether we believe the teacher assessed grade submitted was a reasonable exercise of academic judgement and whether the evidence available can reasonably support the grade.

Each appeal will be handled on a case-by-case basis, not all may be accepted, and not all accepted appeals will result in any outcomes being changed.

Autumn assessment opportunities

Many of our external assessments already have timetabled autumn opportunities, which we intend to continue with wherever possible. Over the coming months we will be engaging with Ofqual and reviewing our position for all timetabled external assessments to ensure that where reasonably possible for comparable qualifications, and manageable for both NCFE and centres, learners will have the same opportunity as those on GCSE and A Levels, to complete an external assessment in autumn and winter 2021 if they wish to improve upon a teacher assessed grade.

Further information on this will be published on our website in the coming months.

Using data to support efficient awarding

As we work together to support learner assessment, certification and progression, it is essential that we maintain up-to-date, accurate, learner-level data. We would therefore be grateful if centres could:

- ensure that all learners you expect to request certificates for during the current session (i.e. before the end of July 2021) are registered with us, following the usual process
- ensure that all learners who you expect will, or would have, completed an assessment during the current session (i.e. before the end of July 2021) are registered with us, following the usual process
- ensure that all learners who are no longer on programme have been withdrawn, following the usual process for withdrawals
- ensure that you make bookings for learners on external assessment, even where they have been cancelled.

Centres should note their obligations under our centre agreement that requires every learner to be registered in line with our requirements so that each learner can be uniquely identified. This is particularly important this year given the impact of the pandemic on assessments and learning and is also a mandatory requirement from Ofqual.

Our customer support and account management teams will be in contact with you in the coming days to discuss the data we hold on your learners; we would be grateful if you could work with them to establish the clearest possible view of the provision we support.

Our support for you

We understand that centres are working incredibly hard to deliver teaching, learning and assessment activity and support learners through the pandemic. We are committed to doing everything we can to support you by providing timely and clear advice, guidance and support – and by making our requirements and processes as simple and streamlined as possible. We are also investing heavily in our systems, customer support team, and EQA activity, to support the additional measures in place. To support you through the rest of the year:

- our weekly newsletter will provide you with the latest updates, direct to your inbox. If you're not already subscribed, you can do so by contacting our customer support team on 0191 239 8000, customersupport@ncfe.org.uk, or via our website

- the Covid hub on our website includes all of our latest news, advice guidance and support on assessment and awarding in the current circumstances
- we will produce and broadcast an extended series of webinars and podcasts, providing practical advice, examples and the opportunity to discuss our approach to assessment and awarding for the rest of the year with our expert team
- you can find qualification-specific advice on our assessment and awarding requirements in 'adaptation addenda' for each qualification in QualHub
- you can contact our customer support team via our website, by phone on 0191 239 8000, or by email at customersupport@ncfe.org.uk. We will extend the team's opening hours at key points through the rest of the year to ensure that you can contact us when you need our support
- you can also talk to your account manager or EQA.

Next steps

We hope you have found this document helpful. We wanted to tell you as much as we could about our approach, as soon as we could. In the coming days and weeks, we will provide you with more detailed advice and guidance, including for example:

- confirming our adapted special consideration, queries and appeals policies and processes for the remainder of the year – and to support teacher assessed grades
- providing you with more detailed guidance on our approach to external quality assurance, including what we will ask you to do to support teacher assessed grades
- confirming key dates e.g. the submission of teacher assessed grades to us such that we can issue results on time in August
- confirming what you will need to do to submit teacher assessed grades to us through the Portal you usually use to submit the outcome of assessment activities to us.

If there are particular aspects of our approach on which you think we need to provide further, substantial advice and guidance please do let us know.

Further information and how to contact us

If you have further questions, you can:

- subscribe to our weekly newsletter
- visit our [Covid hub](#) on our website
- contact our customer support team, on 0191 239 8000, customersupport@ncfe.org.uk, or via the website
- contact your account manager or EQA.