



Guidance for parents, carers and students: GCSEs in England 2021



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

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

JCQ and the exam boards have been working together actively to support teachers, schools and colleges to determine grades this summer. You can find more information in the full guidance document, published on the JCQ website [here](#).

What is happening and when - An overview of how GCSEs will be determined 2021.



How will evidence be used?

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

Records of student performance on the content that has been taught over the entire course of study.

Non-exam assessment, often referred to as coursework or internal assessments, even if not fully completed. Work produced in tasks set by the academy that reflects the specification, format and marking of exam boards. This could include substantial classwork, homework, internal tests or mock exams.

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

In most cases, the range of evidence that teachers use to inform the grade will be consistent across a class or cohort for each qualification. However, the academy may decide that a different range of evidence may be more appropriate to fairly inform some grades, if, for example, a student has missed a significant amount of teaching compared to others in a class.

Keeping you in the know

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

How is the evidence used?

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

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

Determining grades

Once all the evidence is selected and assessments are complete, teachers will decide on an overall grade. They will do this objectively. Exam boards will provide further advice and guidance to show the standard of work expected for particular grades, including additional grade descriptors, to supplement those previously published by Ofqual.

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

Once a teacher has determined a grade, it will be reviewed by other teachers in the academy, so grades are determined consistently with the academy's policy. Exam boards will check the policy to make sure it meets their requirements.

Reasonable adjustments, access arrangements and special consideration

If a student has a special educational need, and/or are disabled, and require reasonable adjustments, these should have been in place when evidence was gathered. Where appropriate reasonable adjustments were not in place when an assessment was taken and the assessment is being used as evidence, teachers need to take that into account when determining grades. The academy could also consider whether other evidence could be used instead.

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

If you have any questions about how personal circumstances will be taken into account or want to raise anything with the academy, now is the best time to speak to us. You should not wait until after the results are published.

Appeals

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

If a student believes an error has been made in determining their grade, they will have a right to appeal. There are two stages to the appeals process:

Stage 1: Centre review

Students can make an appeal to the academy if they believe they have been issued an incorrect grade. The academy will carry out a review to check if the academy:

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

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

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

Stage 2: appeal to the exam board

The second stage of the process is referred to as an appeal to the awarding organisation (submitted by the academy on the student's behalf). The awarding organisation (exam board) will then conduct a review to check whether:

- the academy made an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement in the choice of evidence from which they determined the grade and/or in the determination of the grade from that evidence.
- the academy did not apply a procedure correctly, e.g they did not follow their Centre Policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or mitigating circumstances, such as illness.
- the exam board made an administrative error, e.g they changed the grade during the processing of grades.

At both stages of the process, students will need to submit a request to the academy for an appeal. It is essential that students provide written and recorded **consent** in order for the appeals process to occur.

It's very important to remember that grades can go down, up or stay the same through either stage of the process.

Appeals Process

After results day

Results issued (10/12 August)

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

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

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

No

Yes

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

Centre informs student of outcome

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

Centre submits Awarding Organisation appeal

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

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

No

Yes

Awarding Organisation issues final grade; may require input from Centre

Awarding Organisation issues final grade

Centre informs student of outcome

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

The timeline for appeals

The timelines for priority and non-priority appeals will be as follows:

12 August to 7 September: priority appeals window

- **12 August to 16 August:** student requests centre review
- **12 August to 20 August:** centre conducts centre review
- **12 August to 23 August:** centre submits appeal to exam board

12 August to end October: majority of non-priority appeals take place

- **12 August to 3 September:** student requests centre review
- **12 August to 10 September:** centre conducts centre review
- **12 August to 17 September:** centre submits appeal to exam board

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

How GCSEs, AS and A levels will be awarded in summer 2021

Working out your grade



Graded by teacher judgement



Not graded by an algorithm



School and college assessments can continue



You'll only be assessed on what you've been taught



Your teacher will tell you what evidence is used to grade you



Private candidates to work with a school, college or exam centre to provide evidence for them to be graded

Evidence



Mocks, tests and work already done can be used as evidence



Non-exam assessment should continue



Non-exam assessments can be used as evidence even if incomplete



Art & design grade based only on your portfolio



Teachers can use question banks provided by exam boards if they want to



Results will be based on completed and future work, so keep doing your best

Results and appeals



Results days

AS and A level 10 August
GCSE 12 August



If you're unhappy with your grade, you can appeal it. First step is to submit an appeal to your school or college.

You can find out more details from your school, college or exam board, or by visiting the Ofqual website



www.gov.uk/ofqual