

GUIDANCE

Summer 2020 results for vocational, technical and other qualifications

Advice for teachers, trainers and tutors; learners, parents and carers; employers and professional bodies on vocational and technical qualifications, and general qualifications other than GCSEs, AS and A levels, Extended Project Qualifications and Advanced Extension Award in maths

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About this document

This advice notice aims to provide users of qualifications with answers to some common questions about results to be awarded in summer 2020.

Those working in schools, colleges and training providers should also refer to our detailed [Guidance for Centres](#), which specifically addresses matters relevant to them.

Introduction

Background

On 18 March 2020, the Secretary of State for Education announced that exams in schools and colleges due to take place in summer 2020 would be cancelled in order to help fight the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). On 3 April, Ofqual [published information](#)¹ on how grades would be issued for GCSEs, AS and A levels, Extended Project Qualifications and the Advanced Extension Award in maths.

On 9 April we received a [direction](#) from the Secretary of State which set out how the government expects vocational, technical qualifications, and other general qualifications, to be assessed and awarded in the coming weeks and months. On 24 April we also published the first version of this advice.

Our aims

We want to ensure that learners enrolled on vocational and technical qualifications, which are principally used for progression to further or higher education, are not disadvantaged with respect to their peers in the same cohort taking GCSEs, AS and A levels. The Secretary of State has said that, as far as possible, such qualifications should be treated in the same way as GCSEs, AS and A levels, with learners receiving a calculated result.

The Secretary of State also wants learners who are taking other vocational and technical qualifications that are used for progression to and through employment, as well as further or higher education, to receive results this summer in order to allow them to progress to the next stage of their lives.

Achieving those aims

For many of these qualifications, we expect awarding organisations to issue calculated results to learners, where it is possible to do so, whilst ensuring that those awards are sufficiently valid and reliable. Where this is not possible, we require awarding organisations to adapt assessments or delivery models so that learners can sit assessments and complete their qualifications. We are working with awarding organisations to make sure results awarded this summer are as fair as possible for learners.

In some cases, where qualifications directly signal occupational competence or function as a licence to practise, and where we do not think it will be safe or meet

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employers' requirements to do either of these, there may be no option but for learners to wait until the next available assessment opportunity.

Between 24 April and 8 May, we formally consulted on the temporary arrangements – our extraordinary regulatory framework – which we proposed to put in place to enable learners expecting to sit assessments this summer to receive results.

There was broad and strong support for our proposals, and we can now confirm that we will be adopting the policy approach we consulted on, with additional guidance and strengthened requirements set out in our [extraordinary regulatory framework](#) to take account of feedback received. A [summary of the decisions we have made following this consultation](#) has been published separately.

Qualifications and learners in scope

Which qualifications are covered?

Our extraordinary framework will apply to qualifications:

- covered by the Secretary of State's direction, covering those which are eligible for funding by ESFA, including qualifications:
 - At Entry level to Level 6
 - Designed for progression to FE/HE or to and through employment
 - Which are subject to public funding in England
 - Other general qualifications which were not subject to the GCSE/AS/A level direction.
- which will fall in scope in other jurisdictions
- where awarding organisations have identified, as part of our advice process, that they have a similar qualification to one which appears on the Secretary of State's list (that is, where the qualification titles are the same)

Any general qualification which is not covered by the Secretary of State's GCSE, AS and A level direction (for example, the International Baccalaureate, Pre-U and those termed "Core Maths") is also covered by the extraordinary regulatory framework.

Where can I find out which qualifications are in scope?

We have published [an interactive tool](#) through which you can find out what approach is being used for each qualification – whether calculated results will be issued or whether assessments will be adapted or delayed.

Does this mean that all learners will receive a calculated result or an adapted assessment if that is what's shown on the interactive tool for that qualification?

The approach shown on the interactive tool is the main way that results will be arrived at for most learners. There will however be exceptions for some centres and learners, for example where a calculated result cannot be validly awarded, or because an adapted assessment cannot be accessed. In these circumstances, learners may be able to take an adapted assessment (in the case of no calculated result) or may have to sit their assessments at the next available opportunity.

Which learners will be covered by these arrangements?

If a qualification is determined as being in scope, as far as possible, all learners of that qualification are in scope. Regardless of whether they are publicly or privately funded, no matter their age or the type of centre or setting within which they are

taking their assessments they should be able to access a calculated result or sit an adapted assessment where it is made available by their awarding organisation.

These arrangements will apply to all learners who were due to sit assessments between 20 March and 31 July 2020. This includes learners who may be only part way through their programme of study and will continue with learning towards their qualification after this date. For example, if they had planned to take an assessment on one or more units of a modular course and are half-way through a 2-year programme of study.

We expect the vast majority of these learners will have been registered with their awarding organisation before 20 March. However, we recognise that this is not always the case, and in particular that for some “on-demand” qualifications, learners are only registered with the awarding organisation when they are ready to take the assessment. Where learners had not already registered, we expect awarding organisations to work with their centres to confirm that only those learners who genuinely would have been registered to take assessments this summer are included.

What is the position with qualifications which do not fall under the new extraordinary regulatory framework?

Awarding organisations can still make assessments for these qualifications available and award results to learners. To mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, awarding organisations may decide to offer their learners a calculated result, adapt their assessments or delivery models, or delay assessments, but they will need to take account of government guidance and remain compliant with all our existing rules.

We have issued guidance (as part of our regulatory framework) to support awarding organisations as they decide which is the best approach to take.

What is the position with apprenticeship end-point assessments?

Apprenticeship end-point assessments are not covered by the new extraordinary regulatory framework.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has overall responsibility for policy on end-point assessments.

For those apprenticeship standards where we provide external quality assurance, we have worked with the Institute to provide [advice](#) on arrangements for adaptation of assessments, where appropriate. Details of the flexibilities agreed for apprenticeship standards can be found on [the Institute's website](#).

What is the position with qualifications in other parts of the UK?

Ofqual-regulated qualifications taken in other parts of the UK are in scope of the extraordinary regulatory framework.

We have long-standing collaborative arrangements with the regulators of qualifications in the UK. This is particularly the case with Qualifications Wales and CCEA Regulation because many of the same qualifications are awarded in the same way in these 3 countries. Given the high degree of coherence of both the qualifications available and our regulatory approaches, we have agreed with Qualifications Wales, CCEA Regulation and SQA Accreditation that our proposals relating to Ofqual-regulated qualifications awarded in England should also apply when they are awarded in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Qualifications Wales, CCEA Regulation and SQA Accreditation will have specific requirements in relation to qualifications designed specifically for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland (respectively). [Our interactive tool](#) also includes these qualifications.

What is the position with qualifications offered internationally, as well as in the UK?

Awarding organisations can decide whether or not to issue results to learners taking their qualifications outside the UK under the extraordinary regulatory framework or not.

We expect awarding organisations to determine whether they need to calculate results or adapt assessments based not just on the purpose served by the qualifications, but also on the needs of the market in which they are operating overseas. This may include requirements set out by other regulatory authorities in other countries.

We also expect awarding organisations to consider the particular risks presented by their individual markets, including any risks of malpractice or corruption.

What will happen with school and college performance and accountability measures?

The Department for Education has confirmed that it will not publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020. It will not hold schools/colleges to account on the basis of exams and assessment data from summer 2020 and data will not be used by others, such as Ofsted and local authorities, to hold schools/colleges to account.

About the Extraordinary Regulatory Framework

Why did Ofqual receive a ministerial direction?

The direction was issued by the Secretary of State for Education and is the statutory mechanism that allows us to prioritise government policy (as was the case with the direction for GCSE, AS and A levels).

Between 24 April and 8 May, we formally consulted on the extraordinary regulatory framework to enable learners expecting to sit assessments this summer to receive results in line with the direction. A [summary of the decisions we made following this consultation](#) is published separately.

How long will the extraordinary regulatory framework last?

We are introducing this temporary framework now to meet the current extraordinary circumstances. The temporary framework and associated arrangements apply to all learners who were due to sit assessments between 20 March and 31 July 2020, so they are able to move onto the next stage of their lives. It will be in place for the minimum time possible to achieve this.

What is the position if assessments can continue as normal during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?

Where it is possible for assessments to continue as normal, we will not prevent this. We do not, however, consider that there will be many examples where awarding organisations will be able to do this.

Awarding organisations will need to take account of government guidance and remain compliant with all our existing rules when offering assessments and awarding qualifications during this period.

How the framework will work

How will results for learners be secured for the different categories of vocational and technical qualifications?

The direction from the Secretary of State set out 3 categories of qualifications:

- qualifications used for progression to further or higher education
- qualifications serving a mixed purpose, supporting progression to further or higher education, or to employment
- qualifications signalling occupational competence

For qualifications used for progression to further or higher education

It is government policy that, as far as possible, qualifications in this category should be treated in the same way as GCSEs, AS and A levels, with learners receiving a calculated result. Awarding organisations are required to take all reasonable steps to provide learners taking these qualifications with a calculated result.

For those qualifications or learners where the awarding organisation considers it is not possible to provide a calculated result, awarding organisations will have to evidence why this is the case. In those cases, awarding organisations should offer adapted assessments, rather than automatically delay assessments which would risk limiting the ability of some learners to receive a result who otherwise might have done so.

For qualifications which are used to signal occupational competence

It is government policy that learners should not receive a calculated result. This is because it would not be clear that a learner possesses the skills required by the role to which the qualification relates, or does not meet the standards set by professional bodies or in regulations. This could have health and safety implications.

Therefore, in the interests of securing results for learners, the starting point for this category of qualifications is for the awarding organisation to adapt the assessment or delivery model, where doing so would not undermine the validity or reliability of the result.

Only if adaptation is not possible, should awarding organisations postpone assessments.

Qualifications with a mixed purpose

Learners may receive either a calculated grade or be awarded based on an adapted assessment. Awarding organisations will need to make a decision based on the qualification's principal purpose and the approach most appropriate to deliver a valid result.

The postponement of assessments, leading to a delay to results, should be a last resort.

Functional Skills

It is government policy that learners due to take assessments for Functional Skills qualifications before the end of the summer receive a calculated result rather than an adapted or postponed assessment, because of their importance for progression. Awarding organisations are required to take all reasonable steps to provide learners taking these qualifications with a calculated result and have agreed common approaches for the calculation of results.

When will awarding organisations confirm which approach they will use for their qualifications and what their centres will have to do next?

We expect awarding organisations to be in touch with their centres straightaway to confirm which approach will be used for the qualifications they offer and what centres have to do, if they have not done so already.

Will similar qualifications offered by different awarding organisations always use the same approach?

Awarding organisations may not always use the same approach for similar qualifications. This is because the approach taken depends on the purpose of the qualification, its assessment design and how it is delivered, which can legitimately differ between similar qualifications, and even those with the same title.

For example, different sequencing of modules by 2 awarding organisations offering very similar qualifications might dictate that a different approach needs to be taken. If the practical elements of one qualification had not been assessed before coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions began, the awarding organisation may need to delay that practical assessment, whereas another awarding organisation offering a similar qualification where the practical element was completed earlier in the course may be able to adapt or calculate the remaining part of the qualification.

Another reason for different approaches being taken between 2 similar qualifications would be the availability of sufficient evidence to inform a teacher or tutor's judgement about the grade that a learner would most likely have achieved had they been able to take the assessment. For example, a qualification where learners do not have to submit assignments as they go along and teachers have limited contact with learners, may not be appropriate for a calculated result approach because teachers may not have sufficient evidence upon which to base their professional judgement. For another qualification with the same title, but which is modular and assessed by the centre, it may be possible to issue calculated results because there could be sufficient evidence.

Why have assessments for some qualifications been delayed? Does this mean that some learners won't get results this summer?

Some professional or sector bodies or regulators have decided that assessments must be delayed because their qualifications could not be safely and validly awarded through the issue of a calculated result or by learners sitting an adapted assessment.

Some occupational qualifications require the practical demonstration of skills in the workplace, working with equipment or with individuals or small groups, as part of their assessments. This is not possible due to coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, and it may be that these practical skills cannot be validly assessed through simulation or by professional discussion. If learners have not been able to demonstrate the relevant skills before the centres were closed, then awarding organisations have decided it would not be safe or valid to award an occupational qualification.

In some cases, awarding organisations do not have the capacity and capability to safely and reliably offer adapted assessments.

In these circumstances, there may be no option but for learners to take assessments at the next available opportunity and receive their results later in the year.

What is Ofqual doing to make sure that awarding organisations and centres are able to implement the new approaches?

We have established a number of technical and special interest working groups and are working with the Federation of Awarding Bodies to bring awarding organisations together to work through issues and develop common approaches. We are working with awarding organisations to support their implementation of the framework, for example [by publishing guidance to support centres in making objective judgements](#).

As far as possible, we are asking awarding organisations to take a consistent approach to minimise the burden on centres who may be working with several different awarding organisations. For [Functional Skills qualifications](#), awarding organisations have agreed joint guidance for the issue of calculated results.

We are working closely with sector representative bodies such as the Association of Colleges and Association of Employment and Learning Providers and have also issued guidance for centres to help them to understand [what the extraordinary regulatory framework means to them](#).

What oversight will Ofqual exercise over awarding organisations to make sure that learners' interests are protected and the results issued this summer are fair and valid?

The extraordinary regulatory framework is based on a number of key principles. Awarding organisations are obliged to:

- **principle 1** – issue results to as many learners as possible in spring/summer 2020, provided that those results are based on evidence which ensures that they are sufficiently valid and reliable
- **principle 2** – ensure that each result it issues is as reliable as possible
- **principle 3** – ensure that its approach minimises burden and maximises deliverability as far as possible
- **principle 4** – maintain standards, as far as possible, within the same qualification in line with previous years
- **principle 5** – maintain standards, as far as possible, across similar qualifications made available by the awarding organisation and by other awarding organisations

We expect awarding organisations to keep records of the decisions that they take in line with these principles. We will monitor these decisions, and in some cases will want to test them further. In certain circumstances we may also need to assist an awarding organisation in their decision-making, or to raise issues where it appears an awarding organisation has made an error.

We will monitor all qualifications using a risk and intelligence led approach. We will also take proactive steps to monitor awarding organisations for a designated group of qualifications, including qualifications on Performance Tables, Functional Skills qualifications, and other Level 3 qualifications for example, Applied Generals.

We will also carry out additional monitoring of over 500 Licence to Practise qualifications which we think present the greatest risk should the new regulations not be implemented effectively.

We have also reminded awarding organisations of their obligations regarding malpractice, and have provided statutory guidance on this within the extraordinary regulatory framework.

Calculating results and adapting assessments

How will results be calculated?

Vocational and technical qualifications for learners receiving a calculated result this summer vary in a number of ways, including:

- the amount of teaching time and size of the qualification
- assessment structure (for example, the proportion of internal versus external assessment; or the number of pathways through)
- the profile of marks-based and directly graded components
- the grading structures (for example, Distinction, Merit, Pass; A to E)
- the range of qualification delivery models (for example, timetabled, sessional, on-demand)

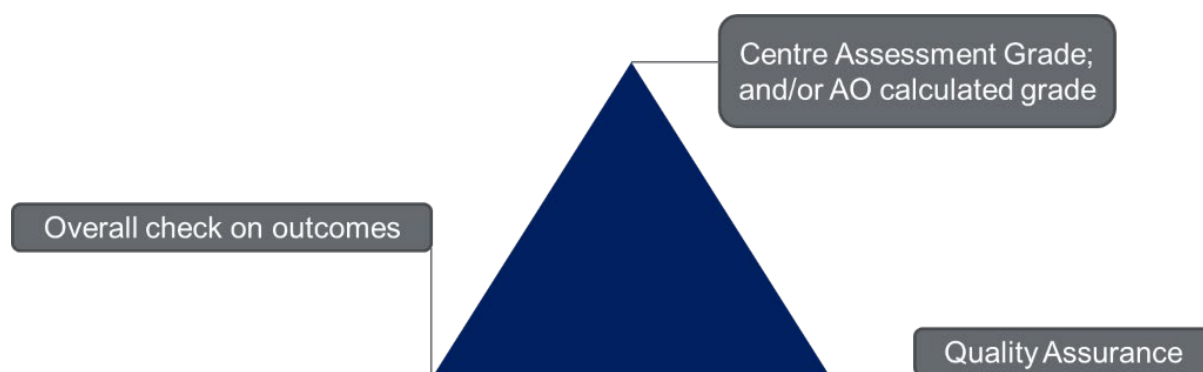
This means that learners due to receive calculated results this summer are likely to have very different profiles of formal assessment already completed.

The framework accommodates these variations by allowing awarding organisations to devise and implement the most suitable approach to calculating grades.

Consistency however remains important.

One of the ways we are helping awarding organisations take a consistent approach to generating calculated results, is by being clear about the 3 essential elements that must be in place. These are

- a centre assessment grade for each learner (generated by the centre) and/or a calculated grade (determined by the awarding organisation) based on the results they already hold for the learner
- quality assurance of the overall calculated result (which is derived from the centre assessment grade and/or any awarding organisation calculated grade)
- a check on overall qualification level outcomes and grade profile, and that it is in line with expectations



Awarding organisations will identify both the available evidence and the evidence that can be collected in respect of each qualification which they can use to determine a calculated result. This evidence falls into 6 categories as detailed below.

1. 'banked component marks or grades' for learners' completed assessments in qualification components to date. This includes both external assessments as well as internal assessments where the marks/grades have already been through the normal moderation or verification processes carried out by awarding organisations
2. internal assessment grades for work that has been completed but not yet subject to external moderation or verification by the awarding organisation
3. centre assessment grades or other centre sourced information about learners. A centre assessment grade is a centre's judgement about the grade that each learner would most likely have achieved had teaching, learning and assessment proceeded as normal. A centre assessment grade could be for the remaining components or it could be requested for the qualification overall, depending upon the structure of the qualification and the proportion of components already completed. This professional judgement is to be derived from evidence (work/records of work) held within the centre which has been reviewed by subject teachers/tutors/assessors and relevant heads of department. Awarding organisations may also ask for other information in order to support an approach to calculating grades, such as a rank order for learners. This might involve an overall rank order of learners or a rank order of each learner in each grade
4. historical data about qualification functioning. This includes the analysis of historic relationships between different components within a qualification which might show that performance on one component is highly predictive of performance on another component. These sorts of analyses might be useful either for generating awarding organisation calculated grades and/or for quality assuring centre assessment grades
5. centre data and information. This includes a range of data and information, such as analyses of qualification outcomes at centre level to understand the degree of stability or variability over time. This historical evidence of centre performance may be useful for generating predictions of centre performance to quality assure centre assessment grades. There may be other information available such as centre risk profiles, centre visit information, and records of any investigations. Again, this data may form the basis for quality assurance
6. prior attainment data. For some qualifications, learner prior attainment data (for example Key Stage 2 data or mean GCSE score) may be available and may be used routinely in annual standards maintenance exercises

We expect awarding organisations to provide effective guidance to centres on the provision of any information that the awarding organisation requires from them in order to calculate a learner's result. Awarding organisations will also have to ensure that they have an effective way to quality assure calculated results.

We also expect that if/when awarding organisations request centre assessment grades, they will also direct centres to include within their consideration the impact of any reasonable adjustment that the learner would have.

Learners who do not feel that their calculated result fairly reflects their performance will have the opportunity to appeal. This will be able to do this via the awarding organisation's appeals procedures. Alternatively, these learners may take a further assessment at the next available opportunity.

How will Ofqual ensure that calculated results are valid and trusted?

We expect each awarding organisation to:

- identify the evidence that is available, and that is potentially available, with the centre or within the awarding organisation for each learner taking a qualification in scope
- evaluate the level of trust they would place in each source of evidence
- devise an approach which maximises the most trusted source of evidence

Any approach developed by awarding organisations to provide calculated results needs to be based on at least one source of reasonably trusted evidence, along with a sufficiently robust means of quality assurance.

Awarding organisations will have to decide what is appropriate and possible based on the design and delivery of their qualifications. We have implemented a range of technical requirements that will support their decision making, so that the results learners receive fairly represent their expected level of attainment, are valid and trusted.

We will also closely monitor the approaches developed for some qualifications. We will take a risk-based approach to monitoring and awarding organisations will have to explain and justify their approaches to us.

We have included additional guidance in the extraordinary regulatory framework for awarding organisations around calculated results, including:

- our expectations on communications with centres regarding the importance of objectivity
- the need for checks on centre assessed grades produced by teachers/tutors (for example through declarations by heads of centre, heads of faculty or department, or similar, recognising the different contexts we are dealing with)

Will the approach to statistical adjustment of centre assessment grades be the same as that used for GCSE, AS or A levels?

Given the number of awarding organisations and the range of different types of vocational and technical qualifications, it will not be possible to use the same singular statistical model that is being developed for general qualifications.

We expect that a range of different approaches, suited for the qualification in question and making appropriate use of the evidence and data available, will be employed. In many cases, these will be different from that used for general qualifications.

Should learners continue to work on or improve assignments or portfolios of evidence to provide more work that could be used to form the basis of centre assessment grades? What is the cut-off date?

Given the disruption to education caused by COVID-19, we do not expect awarding organisations to require centres to use evidence generated after 20 March for the purposes of determining a centre assessment grade, and no learner should be disadvantaged if they are unable to complete any work set after that date. This is in line with our expectations for determining a centre assessment grade for GCSEs and A levels.

However, we recognise that there may be a very small number of exceptions where awarding organisations need additional information, generated after 20 March, to secure sufficient evidence to provide a result. There may also be circumstances where teaching, learning or internal assessment has been able to continue, and the resulting work could provide good evidence for centre assessment grades and allow a more valid award. Awarding organisations will advise centres where this is the case.

The development of knowledge, skills and behaviours leading to qualifications remain important for progression, irrespective of whether they are assessed. Centres will continue to support learners preparing for qualifications where assessments will be adapted or delayed, where they will need to demonstrate that knowledge, skills and behaviours in future.

Which learners are in scope to receive a calculated result?

Learners who have been or would have been entered for assessments due to be taken between 20 March and 31 July 2020 are in scope to receive a calculated result.

Will centres need to keep any centre assessment grades confidential?

We expect awarding organisations to provide effective guidance to centres on this point. This should take account of the way their qualifications are designed and delivered and their usual practice.

Some awarding organisations have done so already. For example, a number of awarding organisations have indicated that centre assessment grades should not be shared with learners or parents/guardians.

Under usual circumstances, centres mark and grade learner work in many vocational and technical qualifications. Learners would routinely be given these results and have the ability to challenge them. This year, many learners may have already been given results in a number of assessments. Because of this we do not believe it is possible or desirable to prevent centres from sharing centre assessment grades with learners in all cases.

When will centres be told by awarding organisations how to provide centre assessment grades? How long will they have to do it?

We have set out our expectation that awarding organisations should ask centres to provide centre assessment grades and other information about learners in a window of up to 3 weeks, starting 1 June.

In exceptional circumstances where awarding organisations need to deviate from this window, they will be in touch with centres. The window will allow time after submission of results for awarding organisations to quality assure the data, check the overall profile of outcomes and, if necessary, raise any queries with centres before results are issued. If centres feel their awarding organisation's deadline is unachievable, they should speak to them urgently.

What is the position if a learner wants to receive a calculated result but their centre, or their awarding organisation, says it is not possible?

Awarding organisations will expect their centres to provide the information needed to support the calculation of results when requested.

If, having reviewed the information provided, an awarding organisation concludes that they cannot issue a reliable calculated grade in a way which meets our requirements, then learners will need to take an adapted assessment, if that is available, or wait and take their assessments at the next available opportunity.

We will monitor how awarding organisations implement the process of calculating results.

What might adaptations to assessments look like?

Adaptations to assessments could take a variety of forms, for example:

- changing the way that assessments are delivered (replacing a paper-based test with an online version)
- adapting assessment methods (using simulation in place of an observation)
- changing invigilation requirements
- waiving or adjusting placement requirements
- changing quality assurance methods from those previously agreed with us (standardisation or moderation taking place remotely or online)

We have included a set of requirements, within the extraordinary regulatory framework, which awarding organisations must apply when making judgements about whether and how to adapt their assessments.

We expect awarding organisations to take all necessary steps to minimise risks to validity by ensuring that coverage of the key areas of the construct of the qualification is retained within the adapted assessment.

We also expect them to act only within the limits of their capacity and capability and take all necessary steps to minimise the burden on centres and learners resulting from the introduction of adaptations to assessments.

Awarding organisations should also look to ensure, as far as possible, that any adaptations minimise any disadvantage to learners, including learners with a protected characteristic.

Do awarding organisations have to comply with the requirements set out by professional bodies or employer groups when deciding on their approach to adaptation?

We have provided statutory guidance within our extraordinary regulatory framework on this point. We have said that awarding organisations should have ‘due regard’ to professional and sector body requirements. This means we expect them to fully consider the details that the professional body has set out. They should give these requirements appropriate weight when deciding how they want to approach an assessment. They can legitimately choose not to follow what has been specified by the professional body, where they think that is necessary, but we would expect the awarding organisation to detail their reasons for doing so.

What is the position if professional and sector bodies do not put in place any specific requirements around adaptation?

If there are no specific requirements set out by a professional or sector body, then we encourage awarding organisations to gather the views of employers and other users of their qualifications to ensure that the qualifications continue to meet the needs of employers. The extraordinary regulatory framework will of course still apply.

What happens if a learner cannot sit an adapted assessment this summer?

Learners will be able to sit an assessment at the next available opportunity.

What is the position if a centre is not able to work with awarding organisations to provide calculated results or to offer adapted assessments?

We anticipate that all centres will prioritise the best interests of their learners, and will therefore provide information to awarding organisations in order to allow provision of a calculated result, and facilitate adapted assessments as appropriate, wherever they can. We recognise, however, that there may be exceptional cases where this is simply not possible. In such cases, learners will need to wait and take their assessments at the next available opportunity.

Will there be an additional assessment opportunity in the autumn?

Where awarding organisations normally offer an autumn assessment opportunity, they must take all reasonable steps to continue to do so. Where they do not normally offer an autumn assessment opportunity, they should do so where there are enough learners who need to take an assessment or where it would be unfair not to. We expect awarding organisations to work with providers, and to take decisions in the best interests of learners, with safeguards for us to intervene if we decide there is a particular need for an assessment that is not being met by awarding organisations.

Information for different groups of learners

How will this affect private learners?

There will be some learners who are studying vocational, technical and other general qualifications independently. Some of these learners may be registered directly with an awarding organisation, others may be registered for a qualification through a centre but may not be receiving education directly from them. These are all considered to be 'private learners.'

Where a centre is providing centre assessment grades for learners taking a particular qualification, they should include private learners where they have seen sufficient evidence of the learner's achievement to make an objective judgement about their likely performance.

Many vocational and technical qualifications are designed with a number of assessments which can be taken throughout the qualification. Where a private learner has completed some assessments, these are also likely to support the provision of calculated results.

Where awarding organisations adapt their assessments, they must offer adapted assessments to private learners in in as similar a way as possible to other learners.

It may, however, be necessary for some learners who have not been studying with a centre to take assessments at the next available opportunity.

How will this affect learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or other vulnerable learners?

We recognise that the provision of calculated results and adapted assessments may be more challenging for awarding organisations in relation to learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or other vulnerable learners².

In the case of calculated results using centre assessment grades, we have said that centres should use their professional experience to make a fair and objective judgement of the grade they believe a learner would have achieved had teaching and learning continued as normal and they were able to complete their assessments. For learners with SEND, or other vulnerable learners, centres should make their judgement assuming learners had continued to receive any usual additional learning support and had any agreed reasonable adjustments in place. Centres may also approach other educational professionals who have worked closely with learners with SEND to see if they are able to provide further information to consider in coming to the centre assessment grade.

We are also providing additional guidance in the extraordinary regulatory framework on the following:

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

- an awarding organisation's overarching duty to consider equality issues when complying with this framework and the need to design assessments to minimise equalities impacts
- objectivity in centre assessment grading decisions
- including a quality control to act as an additional check before centre assessment grades are given to awarding organisations (for example confirmation from a head of a centre or relevant department)

Will special considerations apply this year?

Special considerations may apply for any assessments (including adapted assessments) that do take place this year.

Might the approaches you are implementing to calculate results or adapt assessments disadvantage learners with certain characteristics?

We know that learners taking vocational and technical qualifications are, on average, more likely to be disadvantaged and come from lower socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds than their general qualifications counterparts, making it particularly important that our arrangements limited any further disadvantage to these learners as far as possible.

We carried out an equalities impact assessment, (published as part of our consultation) to make sure that our proposed approaches to calculating results and the adaptation of assessments took full account of equalities issues. In light of this, we are taking a number of steps to clarify our equalities expectations in addition to those we had already set out.

We explicitly reference, within the extraordinary regulatory framework, awarding organisations' equalities responsibilities and the need to design assessments to minimise equalities impacts.

We have produced additional guidance for awarding organisations, within our extraordinary regulatory framework, around calculated results, making clear the importance of objectivity.

Awarding organisations are required to take account of the impact of any adaptations to assessments on learners with a protected characteristic as part of their judgement about whether and how to make changes to the design or delivery of their assessments to ensure that bias is minimised.

We have also introduced guidance on a quality control to act as an additional check before centre assessment grades are given to awarding organisations

Our guidance on appeals also sets out the need for awarding organisations to consider their approach to allegations of bias/discrimination.

How will this affect apprentices?

Arrangements for end-point assessments (EPAs) are not covered by the direction or the extraordinary regulatory framework.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has published [guidance](#) outlining what flexibility there may be in adapting assessments where the rescheduling or delay of an EPA would cause hardship to the apprentice, and has confirmed that approaches to calculate results cannot be used with EPAs.

Apprentices taking other vocational and technical qualifications as part of their apprenticeships may find their results are calculated or assessments are adapted, just as they will be for learners taking these qualifications outside of apprenticeships.

What is the position for learners studying legacy Functional Skills qualifications?

The regulation end date for legacy Functional Skills qualifications has been extended to 31 December 2020 to allow learners who are currently on these qualifications, but who are yet to certificate, an opportunity to complete their qualification.

What about learners taking qualifications in which practical assessments must be performed at certain times of year?

We understand that some qualifications contain assessments that are seasonally connected, such as in agriculture. Awarding organisations are working hard to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged, mindful that delaying assessments is a last resort.

Will this approach only apply to learners completing a course this academic year? What about learners who would have undertaken assessments on modules in year 1 of a 2-year course?

If a qualification falls within scope of the [extraordinary](#) regulatory framework, then all learners, no matter their age, should be able to access a calculated result or an adapted assessment where it is made available by their awarding organisation. We believe that this is the fairest approach, and will lead to more consistent approaches being taken across awarding organisations.

This means that where learners would have been assessed on units or components of qualifications this spring and summer that lead to certification next academic year, the approach of calculating results or adapting assessments should also apply. In some cases, however, the calculated result will be awarded at the end of the second year of the course, when more evidence is available.

What about learners on the first year of a course who were not due to take assessments but who have had their teaching and learning significantly disrupted this year?

We know the COVID-19 outbreak will have caused stress and uncertainty for many students, regardless of whether or not they were due to take exams this year. Students who are studying VTQs, but are not due to take exams until 2021, will also have experienced disruption to their teaching and learning this year. We do not yet know for how long this disruption will continue.

We are working with the DfE, the wider sector and awarding organisations to consider the options for next year.

What about learners in centres which are closed or where they have fewer staff than usual?

Awarding organisations are in touch with centres to explain what information staff need to provide in order to allow calculated results to be issued or adapted assessments to be delivered. In the exceptional circumstances that an awarding organisation finds that it cannot make contact with one of its centres, perhaps because the centre is now temporarily closed and there is no one available to respond, we require awarding organisations to inform us. If necessary we will work with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to support learners to find alternative provision. As a last resort, it may be that some learners experience a delay before they can take an assessment at the next available opportunity.

What safeguards are in place for learners if the awarding organisation offering their qualification has closed or furloughed staff?

Awarding organisations are required to contact us immediately if there is a risk of this happening and we will take steps to protect the interests of learners.

The action we will take depends on the individual circumstances. For example, where necessary we could support awarding organisations in exploring whether it would be possible to use established procedures with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to move learners to alternative awarding organisations. We may also ask awarding organisations to explore whether staff could be released from furlough.

Results and progression

When will results be released?

We expect the results of sessional qualifications to be awarded no later than A levels and GCSEs – that's 13 and 20 August respectively. This is so that no learner who is hoping to progress onto further or higher education is disadvantaged.

The results for some qualifications (for example, many Level 3 and Level 2 BTECs) have in previous years been issued the day immediately before A levels and GCSEs respectively. This year they will be awarded on the same day – either the 13 or 20 August. This change is being made to make things simpler and clearer for learners. We hope that this will particularly help those learners who have undertaken a mixed programme of study which includes VTQs and GCSEs or A levels.

Not all results will be issued on these 2 days; we expect awarding organisations to make sure that other results are awarded in a timely fashion, in line with normal practice.

Will results issued in 2020 carry the same weight as results issued in previous or future years?

The results and grades awarded to learners should have equal status to the results and grades awarded in other years and should be treated in this way by universities, colleges, sixth forms, training providers and employers.

The principles underpinning our extraordinary regulatory framework aim to ensure that, as far as possible, learners receive qualification results this summer, which will allow them to progress as expected either through to higher or further education, or into and through employment.

Can employers have confidence in the qualifications that will be awarded this year?

Employers should be as confident in the qualifications that are awarded this year as they are currently in those already awarded or will be awarded in the future.

We recognise that many qualifications are critical indicators of occupational or professional competence and have developed our extraordinary framework so that all users of qualifications can continue to have confidence in them.

It is government policy that calculated results cannot be issued for qualifications which signal occupational competence. This is because it would not be clear that a learner possesses the skills required by the role to which the qualification relates, or meets the standards set by professional bodies or in regulations.

Our extraordinary regulatory framework requires awarding organisations to take account of sector and professional body requirements, where they exist, when making decisions about how to adapt assessments, and to retain coverage of the key areas of the content of the qualification within any adapted assessments.

Appeals

Can learners appeal these results?

There may be some learners who feel that their results from the summer do not properly reflect their ability. We are all focused on making sure learners are not disadvantaged by these unprecedented circumstances including to allow for an appeal where appropriate. Our current rules already provide for a right of appeal and we expect these arrangements to apply as usual in many cases.

We have provided additional statutory guidance within the framework to promote consistency in approach and to make clear what awarding organisations should consider in relation to the conduct of appeals.

Our guidance makes it clear that awarding organisations are not obliged to consider appeals submitted by individual learners or their representatives unless that is the only way to secure an effective appeal. Our guidance also makes clear that in relation to calculated results it would not be appropriate to allow appeals relating to the professional judgements of teachers and centres, so long as those judgements are arrived at in line with the procedure agreed with the awarding organisation. This is because, in normal circumstances, the basis for such appeals is whether or not a result is reasonable in light of the application of the criteria set by the awarding organisation to the evidence produced by the learner in an assessment. However, calculated results will not be based on assessments that are marked in line with set criteria and there is therefore no common benchmark or standard against which the merits of a particular result could be judged in a fair manner. In addition, the potential exposure in an appeal process of the proposed mark or rank order provided to an awarding organisation by a centre could lead to undue pressure on teachers and centres.

Our guidance also reflects that the closer the approach used by an awarding organisation to calculate results is to that used for general qualifications, the more it may consider it appropriate to follow an appeals process similar to that set out for general qualifications. We recognise that the way the framework is structured for VTQs is different from the one proposed for GCSEs, AS and A levels. We do however consider that the approaches that awarding organisations are expected to take in similar circumstances will be broadly aligned.

Will there be a cost for appeals?

Fees for all aspects of the assessment process are set by the awarding organisations. They will share further information on any fees for appeals in due course.



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