

Grading of vocational and technical qualifications

News story

Limited statistical standardisation used in grading these qualifications.



The statistical standardisation approach that was used for A levels was not generally used for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs), many of which took into account work that learners had already completed in the course of their study. A separate regulatory framework, designed to provide the flexibility needed to cater for the diversity of the landscape of vocational and technical qualifications, covered other qualifications including BTEC, International Baccalaureate and many thousands of others.

Under the framework for VTQs, each awarding organisation has been responsible for developing its own model for issuing results in line with a set of principles. The framework allows awarding organisations, where necessary, to prioritise the issue of sufficiently valid and reliable results over the maintenance of standards. Ofqual developed and implemented this framework in close collaboration with awarding organisations and the wider sector. Although calculated results have been issued for many VTQs, in only a very few cases has the same kind of statistical standardisation process of Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) been used – in other words, we think there are few qualifications where the cohort has received entirely algorithmically determined grades. Instead, awarding organisations have devised approaches which maximised the use of the most trusted evidence and applied a robust form of quality assurance (often involving collection of additional evidence to support teacher judgements).

In many cases where CAGs formed part of the awarding approach, they were issued at unit level (and not at qualification level) and this was generally not the only piece of evidence used – many VTQs are modular in nature and so students will have “banked” results from units they had already taken. The use of banked results helps deliver results that best reflect each learner’s level of knowledge, skills and understanding. So CAGs have not, in most cases, weighed so heavily in VTQ qualification-level results. Feedback from

the sector so far is that VTQ results have been largely stable and consistent with centres' expectations. A move away from a statistical standardisation approach towards using CAGs alone would have limited impact as it would not change the results for the vast majority of VTQ learners.

For the small number of qualifications that have used a statistical standardisation approach similar to the Ofqual model for A levels and GCSEs, we have asked awarding organisations to review their approach. This is likely to mean a small proportion of VTQ results will be reissued.

Published 17 August 2020