

Ofqual decisions on awarding vocational and technical qualifications this summer

Last month, we launched a consultation on [our proposals for awarding vocational, technical and other general qualifications this summer](#), following disruption to exams and assessments caused by Coronavirus (COVID-19).

We received 1,512 responses and there were high levels of support for our proposals. We are today, Friday 22 May, [confirming 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.

Recognising the complexity of the vocational and technical qualifications (VTQ) landscape, we are confirming different approaches will apply to cater for the different categories of qualifications:

- qualifications primarily used for progression to further or higher education. In line with government policy, and like for GCSEs, AS and A levels, where possible, learners should receive calculated results for these qualifications
- qualifications which are primarily used to signal occupational competence. It would not be suitable for these learners to receive a calculated result because it would not be clear they possessed the skills required for the job, which could have health and safety – or other professional – implications. As such, the starting point for these qualifications is for awarding organisations (AOs) to adapt the assessment or delivery model so that assessments can be completed under the current public health restrictions
- qualifications with a mixed purpose may receive either a calculated grade or be awarded based on an adapted assessment. AOs will need to make a decision based on the qualification's principal purpose and the approach most appropriate to deliver a valid result. We will monitor these arrangements to ensure that an appropriate approach is taken and that, where necessary and possible, there is consistency between awarding organisations

Our regulatory framework sets out clear expectations about the approaches AOs should take in relation to these different categories – with key principles to make sure results remain sufficiently valid and reliable. Only where this is not possible, should assessments be delayed.

To help navigate the approach for VTQs this summer, we have launched [a new interactive tool](#). The tool allows users to search for a specific regulated qualification to find out how results will be generated for the majority of learners.

Sally Collier, Ofqual Chief Regulator, said:

In the vast majority of cases this summer, learners taking other general, vocational and technical qualifications will be able to progress in their studies or employment with calculated grades or having taken an adapted assessment. Our new interactive tool will help learners, and the users of these qualifications, understand what's happening with the qualifications which matter to them, so they have the certainty they need to move on in their lives.

Equalities

In our consultation we set out that we expected AOs to consider how they would minimise disadvantage to vulnerable learners and those with special educational needs or protected characteristics, and to take any appropriate actions. This included managing the risk of bias in the process of calculated grades. Having listened to feedback through our consultation, and from further engagement with groups specialising in these issues, we have published further guidance and have developed our framework to further highlight AOs' responsibilities in relation to equalities.

Autumn assessment opportunities

We proposed that learners unable to receive, or seeking to improve, a result this summer should have an opportunity to take an assessment in the autumn – the majority of respondents agreed. We have listened to concerns about holding assessments during the September to December window. We will require that where AOs 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 AOs 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 AOs.

Appeals

Our existing rules already require AOs to have in place an appeals process and that will apply to decisions made under the extraordinary regulatory framework. We have introduced guidance to the regulatory framework to highlight the issues AOs should consider this summer when handling appeals. The guidance also explains where AOs can align their approach to that being applied to GCSEs, AS and A levels, where qualifications are similar.

Malpractice

Many of the decisions AOs will need to take this summer will be underpinned by how they intend to manage the risk of malpractice in their qualifications. Given this, and following further engagement with AOs (including, in

particular, around situations where risks might be heightened, such as in some overseas delivery) we have set out additional statutory guidance in the regulatory framework which confirms AOs' ongoing malpractice obligations.

GCSEs, AS and A levels

We have published the [outcomes of our consultation on GCSEs, AS and A levels qualifications](#), confirming the exceptional arrangements for awarding these qualifications this summer.