



KING HAROLD
ACADEMY

A Guide to Awarding GCSE grades – Summer 2021



Introduction

Earlier this year, the government made the decision that schools and colleges should close to limit the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Year 11 students had already experienced disruption to their learning during the previous academic year and many students faced more disruption during the autumn term due to the need to self-isolate. With the loss of further face-to-face teaching in the new year, the government decided that exams could not take place in a way that did not disadvantage some students.

In reaching this decision, the government acknowledged that many schools have provided high-quality remote learning but there will be an impact on the coverage of the curriculum and students' exam preparation.

Following the responses to the joint consultation issued by Ofqual and the Department for Education (DfE) in January (52% of which came from students), the latest guidance on how grades for GCSEs should be determined in the summer of 2021 has recently been published.

Rationale

The following information aims to provide students, parents and carers with a summary of the government's advice, and the subsequent action we have taken to ensure this is a fair, rigorous and professionally undertaken process. This will not be a process 'done to' students – it is important to stress that all students have agency and the potential to shape their destiny beyond KHA by applying themselves through hard work, commitment and engagement with learning.

Government Guidance – a summary

Assessment and evidence

- Teachers must assess their students' performance based only on content delivered to them by their teachers
- Teachers can use evidence of a student's performance from throughout the course to inform their judgement
- Teachers should determine the grades as late in the academic year as is practicable to enable teaching to continue for as long as possible
- Schools should use a broad range of evidence across the taught content to determine the grades before submitting the grades to the exam boards
- Heads of centres will have to confirm that students have been taught sufficient content to allow progression to the next stage of their education
- Students should continue to work on their non-exam assessment (NEA), including for Project qualifications. This includes continuing any BTEC qualifications which are in progress. NEA will

be marked by teachers and will contribute to the overall grade, whether or not it has been completed, but exam boards will not be required to moderate it

- In GCSE art and design and/or photography, the student's grade must be based on the portfolio only, whether or not it has been completed
- In GCSE English language and GCSE modern foreign languages, centres should determine and submit a separate grade or result for the endorsement. This result or grade should be based on work that has been completed towards the endorsement
- Overall, it will be no easier or harder for a student to achieve a particular grade this year compared to previous years

Support materials

- Exam boards will provide a package of support materials to include questions, mark schemes, data about how students typically performed in individual questions and exemplar materials, as well as advice for teachers about content coverage, topic selection, marking and making grading judgements. This will be based on past questions and will include a proportion of previously unpublished questions for every subject
- Teachers will be able to use the support materials immediately following publication and until the deadline for the submission of grades
- Use of these exam board support materials is not compulsory; they can be part of the range of evidence teachers could use to determine the grade

Quality assurance

- Exam boards will work together as far as possible to ensure that requirements for internal quality assurance (QA) and arrangements for external QA are consistent
- Centres' internal QA arrangements will include consideration of the centre's profile of results in previous years as a guide to help them to check that their judgements are not unduly harsh or lenient
- Exam boards will put in place arrangements for external QA to check each centre's internal QA process and, in a sample of centres, to review the evidence for one or more subjects. Sampling should be both random, and risk-based
- Exam boards will process the grades submitted by centres only after completing, and being satisfied with, any external QA
- Exam boards will require centres to submit a declaration by the head of centre, confirming that the requirements for internal quality assurance have been met

Appeals and results

- Students will be able to appeal their grade
- A student who is unhappy with their grade will first ask their centre to check whether an administrative or procedural error had been made

- Where a centre does identify an error in the grade submitted to the exam board, it can submit a revised grade and a rationale for the board to consider. If the exam board is satisfied with the rationale, it will issue a revised grade
- Where a centre does not believe an error has been made, a student can ask the centre to appeal to the exam board on their behalf. The centre will submit the student's appeal to the exam board and provide the evidence on which its judgement had been made; the exam board will consider whether, in its view, the grade reflected an appropriate exercise of academic judgement. If the exam board judges that it did not, the exam board will determine the grade that the evidence would support. The exam board will also check that the centre has followed its own process.
- Grades can be moved up or down following this process. The adjusted grade will be final
- Results day for GCSEs will be 12th August.

Process of Awarding Grades

Portfolio of Evidence

A portfolio of evidence for each student will be compiled to form the basis of their awarded grades. The evidence we will use includes: mock examination results, classwork, end of unit assessments, essays and responses to exam style questions.

Over the remaining weeks, students will be assessed in most subjects at regular intervals. Each assessment will follow focused delivery of existing content. Outcomes of these assessments will form an important part of the portfolio evidence collected. Grading of assessed work will be moderated on an ongoing basis, both within departments and across centres within TKAT.

ART & DESIGN/PHOTOGRAPHY GCSEs - are wholly assessed by NEA so grades will be based on portfolios only; students should not be penalised if, due to circumstances beyond their control, they were unable to complete their portfolio.

Internal Quality Assurance

The head of every centre must submit a declaration to confirm that QA has taken place. The head of centre declaration will include the following points:

- the centre considers the grades to be accurate
- any information given by the centre about the evidence relied on is accurate and takes into account evidence from other centres a student has attended
- the centre has completed QA as specified by the exam board and their own internal procedures – this includes departmental moderation and cross-Trust moderation
- students entered were those who were already studying the course and had intended to enter for the qualification

- students have completed sufficient content to enable them to progress to the next stage of their education
- the centre is satisfied that work completed by each student is their own
- where students required access arrangements or reasonable adjustments, these were provided
- the centre has taken note of any guidance issued by the exam boards about how to minimise bias and discrimination and is confident that their judgements are fair
- the evidence and all relevant records are available for inspection in students' portfolios.

External Quality Assurance

Exam boards will be required to put in place appropriate external QA. Every centre should have a check on its internal QA approach. The external quality assurance arrangements will be focused on making sure that the process and evidence used by centres to determine a grade is reasonable; it will not involve second-guessing teachers' judgements.

In addition, exam boards will carry out more detailed checks of a sample of centres, reviewing the evidence for one or more subjects. Some centres will be selected from a random sample that is representative of different centre types and some will be selected based on risk.

Changes to grades will only be made if exam boards find that the grade is not a reasonable exercise of academic judgement, rather than as a result of marginal differences of opinion, and only following discussion between the exam board and the centre.

Appeals

The government has decided that students who believe their grade does not reflect the standard of their performance should ask their centre (the school) to check whether it made an administrative or procedural error. If the school finds it made such an error and that, as a result, it submitted the wrong grade to the exam board, it will explain the nature of its mistake and ask the exam board to change the grade.

If a student believes their centre's judgement was wrong they will ask their centre to submit an appeal on their behalf to the exam board. The centre will provide the exam board with the evidence used to determine the student's grade, together with the centre's justification for the grade, the student's concerns and, if the exam board does not already hold it, details of the process used to determine the grade.

The exam board will consider whether the evidence of the student's performance indicates that the grade represents a reasonable exercise of academic judgement. If it decides the grade is supported by the evidence it will not change the grade. If it does not, it will change the grade.

The exam board might also consider the process used by the centre. The evidence on which centres' judgements will be based will vary between centres and sometimes between students within a centre, as will the conditions under which the evidence was produced. This contrasts to a normal year in which grades are based on a student's performance in exams, taken under controlled conditions, set and marked by the exam boards.

Exam boards will be able to identify cases in which there is a clear mismatch between the evidence and the grade. However, an exam board will only revise a student's grade at appeal where the board finds the evidence on which the grade was determined cannot reasonably support that grade, rather than as a result of marginal differences of opinion.

A student's grade could go up or down following an appeal.

The date by which all appeals will have been considered will depend on the volume made, and the date by which the materials are submitted to the exam boards. As in a normal year, we expect the exam boards to prioritise appeals where the outcome will determine whether the student will be accepted onto a higher or further education course.

FAQs

Information in quotation marks (and italics) below are direct quotations from the guidance issued by Ofqual to 'centres'.

How does the awarding of grades differ this year to Summer 2020?

Similar to last year, teachers will be asked to assess students and provide a grade based on their assessment. Unlike last year, teachers will be looking for the level at which they believe the student is **currently working** and not what they **predict** the student could have achieved if they had finished the course. Students will be awarded grades based on the evidence of work they have already completed on the course.

How will teachers determine grades? What evidence will they use?

'Teachers must assess their students' performance, only on what content has been delivered to them by their teachers, to determine the grade each student should receive. Teachers can use evidence of a student's performance from throughout the course to inform their judgement.

Schools and colleges should use a broad range of evidence across the taught content to determine the grades before submitting the grades to the exam boards. Heads of centres will have to confirm that students have been taught sufficient content to allow progression to the next stage of their education, although we will not set requirements about the minimum amount of content that students must have been taught.'

Will an algorithm determine my grade?

No. There will be no algorithm or external grading process. Grades will be determined by teachers, based on the evidence the student provides to them from their course.

What are the principles for determining the centre assessment grade?

'We have decided that teachers should make a holistic judgement of each student's performance on a range of evidence relating to the subject content that has been delivered by their teacher (either in the classroom or via remote learning).'

'Heads of centres will confirm that students have been taught sufficient content to allow progression to the next stage of their education in their required declaration.'

What will be taken into account by each subject?

'Our decision that students should only be assessed on content that has been delivered to them by their teachers will go some way to address the impact on students of the disruption to their education caused by the pandemic.'

I have not finished my Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) as the deadline was not until later in the term. Does this matter?

Do not worry. All students are in the same position and this will not disadvantage you.

'...students should not be penalised if they had been unable to complete their NEA due to circumstances beyond their control caused by the pandemic (for example lack of access to specialist equipment)... Teachers should mark the NEA according to the normal mark scheme (in whole or in part, depending on whether students have been able to complete their NEA); this will give teachers an objective source of evidence on which to base their grade decision. Where students have been unable to undertake sufficient work on their NEA to produce meaningful evidence for teachers to mark, the exam boards will provide guidance on how work they have been able to complete could be considered as an alternative source of evidence.'

I am worried that my mock result was not as strong as I had hoped. Does this matter?

Mock data is one piece of information to be taken into consideration. We are well aware that students often perform less well in their mock examinations than in the final examination.

Are mock grades the minimum we can achieve? Yes, your November mock grade is the minimum you will achieve but you have opportunities to improve your grade through performance in assessments.

Do schools have the final say on the grades awarded?

Yes, schools will issue grades to the exam board and the exam board will need to be assured that the school has quality assured these results internally in line with the guidelines stipulated by the exam boards.

My son/daughter has Access Arrangement for examinations. Will this still be considered within the centre's judgement? Yes, a letter confirming your son/daughters access arrangements will be sent to you. In addition, the information and requirements for their assessment will be shared with subject teachers.

'Where students required access arrangements or reasonable adjustments [The Head of Centre must confirm] these were provided, with appropriate input from the SENCo and/or other specialists' Special

consideration requests, in the event that a student is unable to take an assessment or suffers a traumatic event that might affect their performance, will not apply this summer because students 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.'

My son/daughter was due to take a public examination in Year 10. Will he/she be awarded a grade by the examination board?

Having considered the responses to the consultation that took place it has been decided that students of any age and in any year group who had been entered to take exams this summer will be able to receive a calculated grade on the same basis as other students this summer. The Head of Centre will need to submit to the exam board for such students a centre assessment grade.

When does the school have to submit this data? When will results be issued?

The deadline for schools submitting this data is the 18th June 2021. Results day is as follows:

- GCSEs – 12th August 2021

Can the school share with us what is being submitted to the examination boards?

No, we are not permitted to share any of this information with students, parents or carers before final results have been issued. This is to protect the integrity of teacher judgements and to avoid teachers, heads of subject, senior leaders or the Head of Centre being put under pressure by students and/or parents to submit a grade that is not supported by the evidence. Since the final grades for some or all students in a centre could be different from those submitted, it also helps to manage students' expectations.

What if I am unhappy with the grade the exam board issues me with in the summer?

A student who is unhappy with their grade will first ask their centre to check whether an administrative or procedural error had been made.

All of this is really worrying me. Who can help?

Whilst we cannot share the information we are sending to the exam board with you, this does not mean we cannot support you more generally. We are working extremely hard to ensure this is a fair process with the best possible outcome for all our students. Any more information we receive will be sent out as soon as possible and students can continue to access pastoral support through their Head of Year.

Are you going to use our Year 10 grades as well? We are going to predominantly focus on the work and evidence from Year 11 due to the disruption of Covid-19 during Year 10. However, if you have completed formal assessments in Year 10 or submitted final coursework, these grades will form part of your final grade.

What about our online work? Online work completed during lockdown and home learning tasks set on Google classroom may be considered. It is important that you speak with your subject teachers for further advice as this may vary depending on the subject.

What is happening about the BTEC course I am studying? For Vocational qualifications, you will need to continue to complete the units. There will be differences in assessments and it is important you speak with your class teacher over what is required.

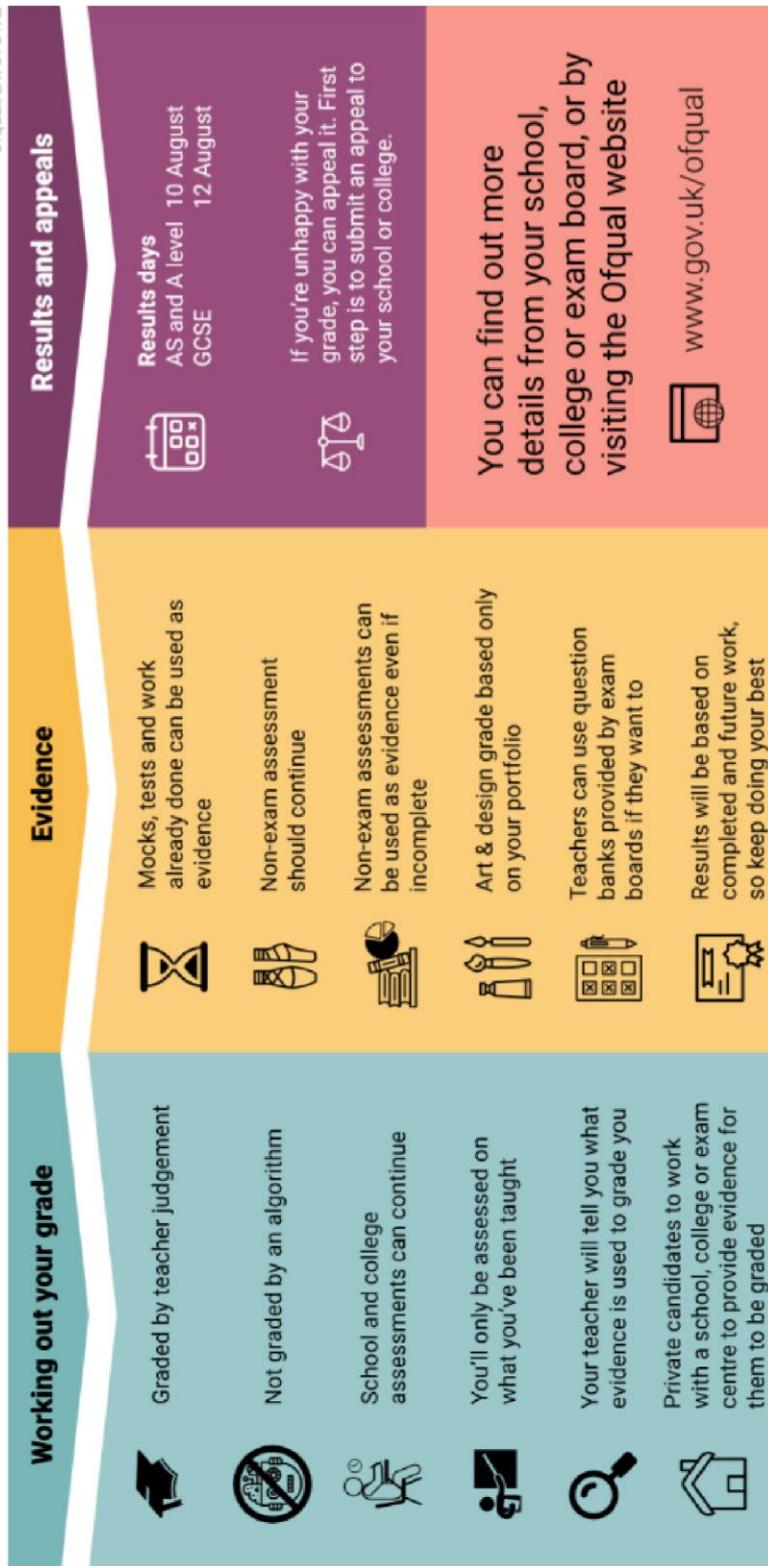
The course I am on has coursework / non-examined unit, do I still need to complete this? Yes, you will need to continue to complete the units/tasks to the best of your ability. For many subjects, this will form part of your final grade.

When do we leave? Year 11 students will leave in the summer term following successful completion of assessments, incorporating time to complete outstanding work. Depending on Covid-19 restrictions, there will be leavers events and more details will be shared nearer the time.

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



Ofqual/21/6751/2



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

Centre informs student of outcome

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

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

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

Centre submits Awarding Organisation appeal

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)