

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

Introduction

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 information¹ on how grades would be issued for GCSEs, AS and A levels, Extended Project Qualifications and the Advanced Extension Award in maths.

The Secretary of State acknowledged that, in addition to GCSEs, AS and A levels, there is a very wide range of qualifications for which learners were expecting to sit assessments and exams this summer. Our priority is that young people and adult learners enrolled on these qualifications are not disadvantaged with respect to their peers in the same cohort taking GCSEs, AS and A levels. We want learners who are taking other qualifications that are used for progression to and through employment, further or higher education, where appropriate, to receive results this summer in order to allow them to progress to the next stage of their lives. But we also recognise that some vocational and technical qualifications signal occupational or professional competence, so in some instances it may not be possible to safely issue results this summer. In such instances we would expect assessments to be rescheduled.

We are working closely with the Department for Education, awarding organisations and the sector to develop the exceptional measures that are necessary to make this happen.

How will qualifications be awarded?

Some qualifications are usually taken alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, and are principally used for progression to further or higher education. This group includes, for example, many BTEC Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, and UAL Diplomas as well as general qualifications such as the International Baccalaureate, Cambridge Pre-U and qualifications included under the umbrella term 'Core Maths'. It also includes Functional Skills qualifications which are taken by a wide range of learners, including apprentices, and play an important role in supporting progression to both further study and to and through employment.

We consider 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. Calculated results will draw appropriately on a range of evidence, depending on the structure of the qualification. They may be based in part on teacher, trainer or tutor judgements of what result each learner would most likely have achieved had they been able to complete their assessments in summer 2020. Any centre assessment result will be based on a range of evidence held by the school, college or training provider. Depending on the structure of the qualification, centres may be asked to provide a centre assessment result for the whole qualification, or for uncompleted modules or units. There might be some instances where they are asked to provide a rank order of learners (as with GCSEs, AS and A levels). The awarding organisation offering the qualification will use any centre assessed result, combined with other relevant information, to determine the most appropriate calculated result. For

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/how-gcses-as-a-levels-will-be-awarded-in-summer-2020>

example, many learners will already have completed assessments in some modules or units, which will be taken into account. Where appropriate, statistical techniques based on students' results in previous years, on these and on their academic qualifications, will form part of the adopted approach.

We are working with awarding organisations to develop the principles of the approach - such that in the same circumstances, the same approach to calculating results would be used - and that it is deliverable for everyone involved. It will be important to ensure that, as far as possible, standards are maintained, such that everyone can continue to have confidence in the qualifications and they retain their currency.

Which learners will receive calculated results?

Learners taking vocational or technical qualifications, or other general qualifications, alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS or A levels this summer for progression to higher and further education are potentially in scope to receive a calculated result. We consider that this could apply to those who would have expected to have completed their assessments and/or received certificates between March and the end of July, and could include some learners being assessed on modules in the first year of a two-year course.

We are working with awarding organisations to finalise a list of qualifications that we will advise the Secretary of State should be in scope for learners to receive a calculated result. Awarding organisations will be in touch with schools, colleges and training providers in the coming weeks to advise them on the information they will be expected to provide about their learners, and when and how it should be submitted.

We want this process to be completed in a timely way so that learners can progress, and the aim is for them to receive results at the same time as GCSEs, AS and A level results.

We are working with awarding organisations to consider carefully how to protect the interests of private candidates, who may not have a relationship with a school, college or training provider that is able to submit centre-assessed judgements.

Will there be a right of appeal?

There may be some learners who feel that their calculated results from the summer do not properly reflect their ability. We are all focused on minimising any disadvantage to learners as a result of these unprecedented circumstances, including allowing for an appeal where appropriate. Under our current rules, an awarding organisation must allow appeals to results where it has not followed its own process. We are considering whether we need to put in place additional guidance to take account of the current exceptional circumstances.

Learners who do not feel their result reflects their ability will be able to complete an assessment at the next available opportunity; most vocational and technical qualifications have a number of assessment windows during the year and some awarding organisations may be able to make additional windows available.

What will happen with other vocational and technical qualifications?

Some qualifications are primarily designed to support progression to and through employment, rather than to further or higher education or to an apprenticeship.

We are working with awarding organisations to identify qualifications in this group where it might still be possible to generate a calculated result. Where this is not possible, or not appropriate, we will encourage adaptations to be made to assessments or to delivery models (for example changing invigilation requirements or moving to remote moderation) as long as this does not undermine the reliability of the result and where assessments can still take place in line with social distancing guidelines, even though centre-based provision has been suspended. In some cases where qualifications directly signal occupational competence or function as a licence to practise, it may not be safe or meet employers' requirements to do either of these, and there may be no option but to wait until normal assessments can happen again.

What about apprenticeship end-point assessments?

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 are working with the Institute on arrangements for adaptation of assessments, where appropriate.

What happens next?

We are working closely with awarding organisations, the Department for Education, regulators in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland and the wider sector. The next steps are for us to confirm the lists of qualifications that are in scope for each category (the award of calculated results; adaptation of assessments; and rescheduling).

We will set out after Easter further details of the approach, and outline those areas where we will need to consult.

In parallel with this, awarding organisations will begin contacting their centres in the coming days and weeks to provide more details.



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