



Joint Council for
Qualifications^{CIC}

Interim Guidance for Centres Accepting Private Candidate Entries for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in Summer 2021

This guidance provides an overview of the elements of the assessment process that are particularly relevant for private candidates in Summer 2021. It applies to private candidates taking GCSEs, AS or A levels. Awarding organisations will be issuing separate guidance applicable to private candidates taking vocational qualifications.

This guidance has been written with private candidates in mind, but may also apply to some other students, particularly those who have changed centres recently. More detailed guidance on the assessment process for all summer 2021 candidates, including advice on grading decisions, will be provided at the end of March.

The Department for Education has published guidance for centres on a Private Candidate Support Grant here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-candidate-support-grant-information-for-exam-centres/private-candidate-support-grant.

JCQ will be producing a list of centres willing to offer GCSEs, AS or A levels to private candidates who wish to enter in Summer 2021. All JCQ centres will be given the opportunity to be added to the list. JCQ will be contacting centres shortly and asking them to provide details of the subjects they can offer, and a brief outline of their assessment process including, for example, whether they can offer assessments remotely and whether they are willing to consider pre-existing evidence.

Private candidates

Private candidates are candidates who have not studied with the exam centre which makes their entry. Included in this group are, for example:

- School age students who have been home educated;
- Adults who have studied independently;
- Students who have studied with a distance learning provider which does not offer exam entry;

This guidance also applies to students at a school or college who have studied an additional subject outside of the school or college.

Overview of Assessment Process

Private candidates will be assessed this year on a range of evidence, in a similar way to other students. Centres will have considerable flexibility to determine the appropriate range of evidence for their students. We expect centres that assess private candidates to use this flexibility to select evidence which reflects the student's particular circumstances, including the content they have covered in their studies.

Centres accepting private candidate entries will need to gain an understanding of how the private candidate has been studying, what evidence they may have already generated, and how much of the specification content they have covered in their studies. This could be achieved by means of a short interview with the student - which could be conducted remotely – or a short questionnaire. This will enable the centre to identify what types of assessment might be most appropriate for the student, whether pre-existing evidence is available and whether any reasonable adjustments or access arrangements are required. Centres should consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 when providing reasonable adjustments for private candidates.

Where a centre wishes to accept a private candidate entry for a subject it does not teach, it may wish to consider engaging third party subject expertise to conduct the assessment process. Awarding organisations may be able to support centres in identifying appropriate subject experts.

Supervising Assessments

Where a centre wishes to supervise an assessment, but the candidate is unable to sit the assessment at the centre, remote supervision can be used. Centres do not need to have specialist remote invigilation software – the candidate could be observed remotely using standard video conferencing software (for example, Microsoft Teams or Zoom).

Quality Assurance and Appeals

Private candidates' results should be included in a centre's internal quality assurance checks as far as possible, but they may need to be excluded from wider quality assurance exercises where, for example, their evidence base is different from the centre's other candidates. Private candidates should also be excluded from any check using the centre's historical data. Evidence to support private candidates' grades may be reviewed during external quality assurance, but private candidates will be treated separately in statistical analysis used to identify centres for checks. Private candidates will not affect a centre's published results or historical performance. Further guidance on internal and external quality assurance processes will be provided at the end of March.

Appeals for private candidates will follow the same process as for other candidates. More information on appeals will be provided in due course.

Types of Evidence

Pre-existing evidence

Some private candidates may have already generated a significant amount of evidence during their studies, including essays, assignments and mock exams – while others may have no pre-existing evidence. Before deciding whether to accept pre-existing evidence a centre will want to consider the conditions under which it was produced and the level of confidence they can have in its authenticity.

Where evidence has been set, supervised and/or marked by a third party, the centre should ask for the evidence to be submitted to it directly by that third party, along with a supporting statement confirming:

- the conditions under which the assessments were taken;
- whether any reasonable adjustments, access arrangements or special consideration were applied;
- that the third party is not aware of any potential conflicts of interest, for example that there is no personal or family relationship between the student and tutor;
- that the third party will cooperate with the awarding organisation if needed, for example, during the appeals process.

Pre-existing evidence must not be accepted if the centre has concerns about its authenticity, for example if the standard of work is much higher than in comparable assessments completed under centre supervision.

Assessment materials provided by the Awarding Organisation

Centres may want to base one or more assessments on the additional assessment materials provided by awarding organisations, or on available past exam papers. Further information on the additional assessment materials will be available at the end of March, including guidance on how centres can use the assessment materials to devise suitable assessments.

The centre should ensure the private candidate is assessed only on what they have studied, like other students. This should be informed by the initial conversation they had with the student, as well as any other pre-existing evidence provided.

Additional assessments

In some cases, particularly where there is no suitable pre-existing evidence, centres might wish to set additional assessments in order to ensure that the range of evidence available to them is sufficient to enable them to determine an appropriate grade. This might also be useful in cases where a student's performance is considered borderline and additional evidence would help to support the centre's final grading decision.

In some situations, where other assessment methods are not suitable and the student is comfortable with this method of assessment, a verbal assessment might be useful to help confirm the final grade for the student. If this is used, the assessment should be recorded so that it can be referred to later during the centre review and appeals process if necessary. The focus of the assessment should be to assess the student's knowledge and skills as required by the specification.

Sources of Pre-Existing Evidence

The following guidance may be helpful:

Source of evidence	Examples	Guidance for centres
Evidence set, supervised and/or marked by a tutor or organisation with whom the centre has an established relationship.	This might apply, for example, where the candidate has studied with a distance learning provider which has established links with the exam centre accepting the entry - or where the centre has appointed a specialist tutor to work with the student.	<p>In this case the centre may accept the evidence and grading judgement of the third party, provided it has no grounds for concern about authenticity.</p> <p>Alternatively, the centre may accept the evidence and make its own grading decision, for example where other assessments are also being taken.</p> <p>The evidence and grade should still be subject to internal quality assurance checks to ensure, for example, that all of the necessary documentation has been completed.</p>
Evidence set, supervised and/or marked by an educational organisation recognised by an appropriate independent authority, for example LEA, DfE, Ofsted, an awarding organisation.	<p>This might apply, for example, where a student has completed some work with one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distance learning provider • another approved exam centre • community language centre • hospital or prison education service • performing arts organisation • Pupil referral unit <p>This may also apply to students who have moved schools or colleges during the course of study.</p>	<p>In this case the centre may accept the evidence and grading judgements of the third party provided it has no grounds for concern about authenticity.</p> <p>The centre will want to have gain assurances from the person responsible for the student's assessment that the approach taken meets the awarding organisation requirements.</p> <p>Alternatively, the centre may accept the evidence and make its own grading decision, for example where other assessments are also being taken.</p> <p>The evidence and grade should still be subject to internal quality assurance checks to ensure, for example, that all of the necessary documentation has been completed.</p>

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<p>Evidence set, supervised and/or marked by a private tutor with whom the centre has no established relationship.</p>	<p>This might apply, for example, where a student has completed some assessments with a private tutor, arranged independently by the student or their parents.</p>	<p>Exceptionally, in cases where the student does not have sufficient other pre-existing evidence, the centre may accept evidence generated with a private tutor but should always validate the student's performance by setting at least one other assessment under centre supervision.</p> <p>If there is a marked difference in performance, the student should be asked to complete further assessments in order to establish the student's performance standard.</p> <p>The final grading decision should be taken by the centre on the basis of the full range of available evidence.</p> <p>The evidence and grade should be subject to internal quality assurance checks.</p> <p>Evidence produced with a tutor should not be accepted where the centre has taught the student that subject.</p>
<p>Evidence set, supervised and/or marked by the student's parent or produced independently by the student.</p>	<p>This might apply where a student has studied completely independently or with only parental support and supervision.</p> <p>This category does not include evidence that has been set and marked by another education provider, and produced under parental supervision at their request (e.g. students remote learning during lockdown).</p>	<p>Evidence in this category should not be accepted due to the potential conflict of interest.</p> <p>In this case the centre should develop a range of evidence based on assessments drawn from awarding organisation materials, or centre devised materials.</p>

Some centres may prefer not to accept pre-existing evidence and instead to set new assessments on which the grade will be based. Some centres may also offer the candidate a choice of approaches. This is at the discretion of the centre, provided that students are informed of this in advance so that they can make an informed choice when selecting a centre.

Examples to show how the different sources of evidence might be combined:

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Pre-existing evidence	<p>This student has a substantial amount of pre-existing evidence produced with a private tutor.</p>	<p>This student has studied with a distance learning provider and has generated a range of appropriate evidence. The distance learning provider has marked the work and determined an overall grade.</p> <p>The centre discusses the DLP's approach and receives assurances that it meets the AO requirements, giving them confidence to submit the proposed grade.</p>	
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Centre generated evidence	<p>The centre sets the student an additional assessment, drawn from AO materials, under remote supervision before determining their final grade.</p>		<p>This student has no pre-existing evidence so the centre sets an assessment based on AO assessment materials, taken under centre supervision.</p> <p>The centre also sets additional assessments of a different type on topics not covered by the first assessment to ensure they have a good basis for their grade.</p>