



Produced on behalf of AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC

**Important information for subject teachers, senior leaders and heads of centre –
GCSE, GCE AS and A-level non-examination assessment (NEA) components
June 2021**

Introduction

This document is intended to help centres who have candidates completing GCSE, GCE AS and A-level qualifications with NEA components this summer. It provides information on how candidates may complete work at home.

As NEA may contribute to the evidence teachers use to determine grades, candidates should continue with the completion of NEA components where it is safe and possible to do so. Please note that the usual deadlines for NEA are not applicable this year. Teachers should balance candidates' performance in NEA components, even where they are not complete, with other sources of assessment evidence.

The awarding bodies have previously made adaptations to some of their specifications as permitted by Ofqual to mitigate lost teaching and learning time. For example:

- In GCSE Design & Technology, candidates are permitted to make mock-ups and/or clear and detailed intentions of prototypes instead of making the final prototype.
- In GCSE Drama, the requirement for visiting examiners has been removed and centres have been allowed flexibility in other modes of presentation.
- In GCSE English Language, there is not a requirement to submit a sample of audio-visual recordings of Spoken Language assessment for monitoring.

Where relevant, these still apply in the context of the alternative arrangements now in place for grades to be awarded based on teacher assessment.

Candidates completing written, practical and performance work at home

In many subjects, essays, reports or other written work are either part of or the whole NEA submission. In other subjects, practical work towards a product or a performance is undertaken.

Teachers may allow candidates to undertake their written, practical and performance work at home where:

- the centre has moved to remote online learning;
- he/she is self-isolating and is not able to attend the centre;
- he/she is not able to access specialist equipment within the centre but is able to do so at home;
- the candidate has missed the opportunity to produce work within the centre;
- time constraints mean that the teacher judges that insufficient teaching time remains to complete written NEA work in class.

Access to the internet is permissible for research, but teachers must remind candidates that the work must be their own. Where a candidate has received assistance, this must be acknowledged.

If teachers are suspicious of any work-in-progress being completed at home, they should feed back to the candidate their concerns and give them another opportunity to complete the work.

Advice to teachers where candidates are completing written or practical work at home

Although there will be no formal authentication procedures this summer, it is important for teachers to be confident that NEA work used as part of the evidence to determine a candidate's grade is the candidate's own. This applies equally where candidates are undertaking written or practical work at home.

To maintain an authentication process, we advise that regular checks are undertaken. These could be achieved by:

- conducting a Question & Answer session with the candidate;
- online video conferencing to observe working and discuss progress with the candidate;
- comparing candidate performance at home with work completed within the classroom;
- setting specific timescales for the work to be started and finished, and keeping records of when the work was produced;
- reminding candidates of the risks of getting help at home from family members which could constitute over assistance.

Advice to teachers where candidates are completing performance tasks at home

The principle remains that the teacher must be able to assess the performance as accurately as they would usually and be able to authenticate it as the candidate's own. The ideal way to achieve this with remote supervision would be to view a live stream of the performance. However, this is not always possible and other evidence may be sufficient to permit teacher assessment and authentication. Depending on the subject, this could include one or more of the following as appropriate to the subject:

- video recording of all or part of a performance;
- audio recording of a performance;
- photographic and written evidence;
- a discussion with the candidate.

Safety and risk assessments

The awarding bodies are unable to provide health and safety advice.

Centres should follow their own risk assessment and safeguarding policy when allowing candidates to complete practical work at home. This is particularly important in any subject where specialist equipment and facilities are normally used.

For example, consideration should be given to:

- whether candidates have safe access to resources;
- where practical work is involved whether this can be recorded safely, and the candidate will be able to produce the work to a sufficient quality;
- whether the task involves the use of equipment which would usually require supervision within the centre;
- whether there is a specific part of a task which could be safely completed at home;
- whether a suitable quiet area or home environment is available to enable the work to be completed.

Guidance for teachers assessing NEA where work is incomplete or alternative evidence has been permitted by Ofqual for summer 2021

Ofqual, in their report, [Decisions on how GCSE, AS and A level grades will be determined in summer 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92121/decisions-on-how-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades-will-be-determined-in-summer-2021.pdf) confirmed that:

‘students should continue to work on their non-exam assessment (NEA). NEA will be marked by teachers and will contribute to the overall grade, whether or not it has been completed, but we will not require exam boards to moderate it.’

They also stated that:

‘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).’

Considerable restrictions have been placed on teachers and their students this year, making it difficult for many to access equipment, facilities and software. Teachers, particularly those assessing practical NEA subjects, where access to this equipment is necessary to allow students to complete their tasks, may, therefore, be faced with incomplete evidence or where it is permitted by Ofqual, alternative evidence to assess.

NEA, whether it is complete or not, may form part of the range of evidence on which a candidate is assessed. This guidance is about assessing the NEA itself, whether or not it is complete. Separate JCQ guidance on grading will outline how NEA can be considered by teachers alongside other evidence of a candidate’s attainment when making final grading decisions.

Teachers should take an evidence based approach to how candidates have demonstrated knowledge understanding and skill, irrespective of the form in which their NEA is presented.

NEA adaptations for 2021: Assessment guidance

In 2021, as in previous years, we strongly advise that you assess NEA in terms of bands and marks. This guidance aims to assist you in resolving the following assessment problems:

- how to assess NEA carried out as per the relevant specification in comparison with adaptations which have been agreed by Ofqual for 2021;
- how to assess alternative evidence of NEA in cases where learners’ access to equipment, facilities and software has been affected by Covid restrictions;
- how to assess incomplete NEA.

Ofqual published [confirmation of the assessment changes in summer 2021](#) in August 2020. These include adaptations to NEA components. Each awarding body has published information about how these confirmed changes will work in practice on their website. We recommend that you read these documents in conjunction with the following guidance.

1. How to assess NEA carried out as per specification in comparison with adaptations agreed for 2021

The adaptations to NEA have been designed to provide opportunities for all candidates, under whatever circumstances, to be able to demonstrate the application of relevant knowledge and understanding or the application of skills and techniques (as appropriate). It should be possible for adapted work (produced in line with the published adaptations) to achieve the same high, medium or low marks as 'non-adapted' work completed as per specification requirements. Candidates submitting this kind of alternative evidence should still have access to the full mark range. When assessing adaptations to specified NEA requirements, teachers should identify the ways in which the work demonstrates how assessment objectives have been met. This involves focusing on how appropriate knowledge, understanding, skills and techniques have been applied in the adapted formats.

In most cases, exemplars from previous years will demonstrate how assessment objectives have been met in fully-finished, 'non-adapted' formats. In referring to exemplar material, it is recommended that you isolate the ways in which the assessment objectives have been met so that you can relate that to the adaptations set for 2021. It is recommended that you guard against the possibility of over-rewarding 'non-adapted' NEA or under-rewarding the knowledge, understanding, skills or techniques demonstrated in an adapted piece of work by ensuring a consistent focus on Assessment Objectives.

2. How to assess alternative evidence of NEA in cases where learners have been unable to access equipment, facilities and software

Teachers should encourage candidates to produce a **portfolio** of evidence such as practice, draft or other work carried out at home or in class in preparation for their NEA which clearly demonstrates how the assessment objectives have been met. Examples could include but are not limited to:

- initial design models or part-models;
- indications of the requirements of manufacturing within design work;
- accurate working drawings;
- practice work (creative and/or technical);
- mood boards;
- lighting plots and cue sheets;
- mini-assignments.

Shortcomings in some areas may be balanced by strengths in other areas and a best fit approach should be implemented when applying the assessment criteria, as in normal circumstances.

3. How to assess incomplete NEA

Where candidates are unable to complete their NEA as per the specification requirements and/or published adaptations and therefore submit incomplete work, teachers should aim to assess the degree to which the work presented demonstrates attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers should clarify how marks have been awarded and we recommend that you continue to use awarding body coversheets for this purpose. The following are examples of how incomplete work may be assessed.

- Incomplete research – look for evidence of appropriate research and application of knowledge and understanding of as many key concepts as possible;
- Incomplete planning – look for alternative evidence of planning to cover application of appropriate knowledge and understanding;
- Incomplete production – consider adapted forms of evidence which demonstrate elements of knowledge, understanding and skills.

Where NEA is incomplete and some elements are missing altogether, you should not attempt to predict an outcome or award a mark according to a candidate's potential. Depending on the amount missing, you might mark the NEA out of fewer marks to reflect the missing element(s) and look for supplementary evidence which demonstrates similar skills, knowledge and understanding when making final grading decisions for the qualification.