



Joint Council for
Qualifications^{CIC}

JCQ Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Introduction

JCQ has developed this series of frequently asked questions along with supporting answers to help exam centres prepare for a scenario in which summer 2022 examinations do not go ahead as planned.

The government's clear policy decision is that GCSE, AS and A level exams will go ahead in England in Summer 2022. JCQ and the awarding organisations continue to work, and to support students, schools and colleges, on this basis.

Ofqual's **Contingencies decisions document**, published jointly with the Department for Education, sets out the plans in the unlikely event that exams are unable to go ahead as planned in Summer 2022.

If you are unable to find the answer to your question here, please refer to your relevant awarding organisation for further assistance.

AQA

OCR

Pearson

WJEC

2. Assessment

Is the published guidance statutory?

The published guidance is not statutory. It is intended to support centres to take a proportionate approach to gathering evidence that would be used to inform TAGs if exams are cancelled, recognising that centres are operating in the context of uncertainty during this academic year.

Can I collect evidence for NEA only, and/or award a grade on the basis of NEA only, if exams are cancelled?

For Art and Design and the Extended Project Qualification, this is a valid approach. However, other subjects include a mixture of assessments. In line with the Ofqual guidance, taken together your assessments should reflect the intention to assess students on a wide range of content, similar to that on which they will expect to be assessed in their summer exams. Following the guidance will help ensure that your assessments achieve this.

Ofqual's guidance states that sources of evidence should be consistent across a class or cohort of students. What does 'consistent' mean in this context?

As with 2021, we advise that, as far as possible, the same tasks should be used consistently across a class or cohort. Students should be assessed on the same tasks at the same time, or, if you cannot assess the whole cohort at the same time, the approach you take should be consistent for the cohort; students should be assessed at broadly the same time, over the same range of content and using the same style of assessment. The questions must differ between assessments.

Our assessment plan doesn't fit with Ofqual's guidance on how/when to assess. Do we have to change our plan?

You should use the guidance to determine if your planned approach meets its requirements, and amend your approach where it is possible to do so and appropriate for your setting. If it would not be reasonable to amend your approach and exams are cancelled you will need to explain your approach in your centre policy.

We have already completed some assessments. Can we use this evidence to contribute towards TAGs?

In principle, evidence from previous assessments in this academic year may contribute to the award of TAGs, if exams are cancelled. However, as noted in the Ofqual guidance, where assessments have already taken place under different conditions, centres should exercise their judgement over whether it would be appropriate, and in the interests of their students, for evidence gathered from those assessments to contribute towards TAGs if needed.

If exams are cancelled, you will then need to explain your approach in your centre policy.

When should I assess candidates?

Evidence of candidate performance should be collected during the academic year, at points identified by the centre, and in line with what you had planned to ensure candidate preparedness for examinations. You do not need to set up additional assessments which are solely to provide evidence for TAGs.

How many assessments should each candidate undertake?

Ofqual's guidance suggests a sensible approach may be to plan to utilise three assessment opportunities – in the autumn, spring and summer terms. However, Ofqual's guidance acknowledges that some centres might for good reason take a different approach, and the number of assessments you conduct may vary dependent on your assessment plan as a centre. Taken together, the assessments should cover a range of specification content.

Additionally, consideration should be given to the balance of examined and non-examined assessment within the qualification when deciding on the number of occasions on which students should be assessed.

What tasks should I use for these assessments?

Students should be assessed on content they have been taught. It would be appropriate for you to utilise any of the published past exam papers the awarding organisations have made available, in full or in part, though not using all of the past papers from a single examination year to avoid predictability. Alternatively, the assessment can consist of tests that have been created by your centre. If you develop your own assessments, the questions used should be in a similar style to those found in the corresponding awarding organisation's exam papers, as outlined in the guidance. Students should not know or be able accurately to predict the materials on which they will be assessed.

Do these have to be taken in exam conditions?

Ofqual's guidance refers to 'exam like conditions'. It is not necessary to, for example, use the gym or bring in external invigilators, but candidates should work independently under timed conditions for each of their assessments. They should not have access to books or revision notes, though adaptations announced for 2022, such as provision of formula sheets in GCSE mathematics, should be implemented. Assessing students under exam like conditions will help them prepare for the summer exams.

When do the assessments need to be completed?

You can follow your normal schedule of work and assess your candidates when you would normally do so. The assessments could be spread over the autumn, spring and summer terms, providing they are completed in time for the provision of TAGs if these are required. Ofqual's guidance notes that a sensible approach may be to plan for the third assessment in the first half of the summer term.

We have not scheduled an assessment during the autumn term. Could this be considered as maladministration or malpractice?

No. It is for centres to decide when to assess students and there is no requirement for any of the assessments which may be used for evidence for TAGs to take place during the autumn term.

How should I mark the assessments?

If you are using an awarding organisation past paper you should use the published mark scheme that is available alongside it. It can also be helpful to refer to other resources, such as examiner reports, where available, which contextualise the information in published mark schemes. It is important that, if multiple teachers in the centre are undertaking the marking, there is a common understanding of the mark scheme.

Do centres need to retain student work/assessments that might be used as the basis for Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG)?

Yes they do. From 11 November 2021, all student work/assessments that would be used as the basis for the TAG if exams are cancelled must be retained by the centre, securely. The centre must retain the original or a copy/scan of the original. Centres may decide to give students their work back, and where they decide to do this, they must adhere to the requirement to retain a copy/scan of the original so they can provide it to the Awarding Organisations, should this be requested.

Where an assessment has taken place prior to 11 November 2021, and a centre has decided it is appropriate to use the assessment for a TAG, the evidence, or a copy of it, must be retained if it has not already been returned to the student. Centres should keep a record of any assessments that cannot be retained because they have been returned to students and they should retain evidence that the assessment took place and the marks/grades for the assessment.

If TAGs are required, the student's work must be retained by the centre until at least the deadline for appeals has passed, or longer, in cases where an appeal is still in progress at the deadline date. A copy of the student work/assessments must be provided, as required by the Awarding Organisation, during quality assurance activity and as part of an appeal application, where relevant.

It is recommended that centres have appropriate backups of digital files to mitigate any risk of loss of data, e.g. due to a cyber-attack. (Awarding organisations should be informed of the incident.) If exams proceed as expected, centres will be informed of a date on which they can destroy the evidence or return it to the student concerned.

What do students need to be told about our assessments?

It's important that student expectations are clearly set from the outset, in order to allow them to prepare for assessments that may contribute to their TAG. Not every piece of work, test or assessment which a student completes would be used as evidence for a TAG. It is vital that this message is given clearly to students to prevent unnecessary stress and anxiety.

Centres should identify which assessments would be used as evidence to determine TAGs, should they be required. Students should be informed in advance that the assessment might be used to determine their grades if exams do not go ahead in 2022, about the conditions of the assessment and that any attempted malpractice will be reported to the JCQ awarding organisations .

3. Access Arrangements/Reasonable Adjustments

Q. How is an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment applied to an assessment which might be used to determine a TAG should exams be cancelled?

A. Every effort must be made to ensure that students' approved access arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments, such as 25% extra time, a computer reader/reader, a scribe are put in place for assessments which may be used to inform a TAG. This applies regardless of whether the access arrangement/adjustment was approved online or delegated to centres. SENCos, or equivalent members of staff within colleges, must liaise with teaching staff.

A record of the arrangement(s)/adjustment(s) used in each assessment must be kept. A record must also be kept where an approved access arrangement or reasonable adjustment was not, at the time of the assessment, given to the student. The need to keep records will apply whether the access arrangement or reasonable adjustment was approved online or delegated to centres.

Where the need for an access arrangement/adjustment is identified after an assessment has taken place, the teacher should record the reason for the late identification. The student should be allowed to undertake a different but equivalent assessment with the access arrangement/adjustment in place.

4. Modified papers

Q. Can I order modified versions of past papers or modified versions of sets of questions from a range of past papers?

A. The JCQ member awarding organisations offer most past papers in a modified format.

Past modified question papers can be accessed at:

- AQA: <https://extranet.aqa.org.uk/>
- Eduqas: WJEC (www.wjecservices.co.uk) – Past papers may be found within ‘Resources’, then ‘Past Papers and Marking Schemes’
- OCR: <https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/past-paper-finder/>
- Pearson: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/exams/past-papers.html>

The awarding organisations will continue to provide their usual support to centres with advice and guidance on how to modify assessment material. Where a past paper does not exist in a modified format and the centre feels unable to modify the paper themselves, the awarding organisation will work with them to find an appropriate solution which may include the production of modified versions, whether in a modified enlarged format or in Braille.

5. Special consideration

Q. Can a teacher apply a special consideration tariff to a grade?

A. A teacher can only apply a special consideration tariff to a mark for an assessment.

This would be where a temporary illness, a temporary injury or some other event outside of the student's control has affected their performance in an assessment which might be used to inform a TAG.

Special consideration would be given by applying an allowance of additional marks to the affected assessment. The size of the allowance depends on the timing, nature and extent of the illness or misfortune. The maximum allowance given would be 5% of the total raw marks available for the assessment. The teacher must be satisfied that there has been a material detrimental effect on the student's performance in the assessment.

Examples of circumstances and the percentage adjustments are listed on pages 6 and 7 of the JCQ publication *A guide to the special consideration process* - **Guide to the special consideration process- General and Vocational Qualifications**.

A record must be kept of the special consideration tariff applied to any assessment (assessment record). The teacher **must** also record how they determined the impact of the misfortune. Any supporting evidence used to determine the special consideration tariff **must** be retained on the centre's files.

Students **must** be reminded to raise any mitigating circumstances which warrant special consideration. It is important that students raise these issues **at the time of the assessment**.

6. Private Candidates

FAQ for Centres

Can I be added to the JCQ centre list for centres offering to accept private candidate entries?

Yes, JCQ will be contacting all centres to ask if they would like to be added to the JCQ centre list.

Can I still accept private candidate entries if I am not on the JCQ list?

Yes, all approved exam centres can accept private candidate entries. You do not have to be included on the JCQ list.

If I make an exam entry for a private candidate and exams are cancelled, do I have to work with them to provide a Teacher Assessed Grade?

No, centres are not obliged to provide TAGs to private candidates in the event that exams are cancelled but we would encourage you to work with the candidate if possible. You should make it clear to private candidates when you accept their entry whether you are willing to do this.

Will there be a grant to cover additional assessment costs, as in 2021?

If exams are cancelled, the Department for Education would explore ways to encourage centres to work with private candidates and to provide affordable opportunities for private candidates to work with centres, as they did in 2021.

If I accept a private candidate exam entry and the student later wants to move to a new centre, will I be charged for withdrawing the entry?

You will not be charged for withdrawing an entry, provided you withdraw prior to the relevant awarding organisation deadline. Each awarding organisation sets its own deadline for withdrawal of entries. These are normally within March or April for a summer series and the dates can be found on the awarding organisation websites. We encourage centres to be as flexible as possible in allowing students to change centres if they need to.

How can centres determine what a private candidate has been taught, in order to set suitable contingency assessments?

You could do this through a conversation with the student and, if appropriate, their parent or carer. If the student has worked with a distance learning provider, tutor or supplementary school, you could ask the student to obtain a list of topics that they have been taught from their teacher. You should confirm the content that a private candidate has studied, and also which assessments have been used by the student during their studies or in mock examinations.

7. Malpractice

Can candidate malpractice occur and if so what should we do?

Yes, malpractice could occur as these assessments might be used to determine students' grades if exams are cancelled, and coursework (NEA) will also contribute to outcomes in the summer 2022 examinations.

Students might attempt to gain an unfair advantage during the centre's delivery of assessments by, for example, being in possession of/using a mobile phone, submitting fabricated evidence or plagiarised work. Such incidents would constitute malpractice and centres must report these immediately to the appropriate awarding organisation in the normal way using the JCQ M1 Form (the form and further details can be found in the [JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures](#)). The awarding organisation will then provide further guidance on the next steps, including details of any sanctions to be applied.

The JCQ awarding organisations recognise and will be sensitive to the fact that for many students these assessments may be their first formal assessment. When a malpractice referral is received, the malpractice investigation teams will carefully review the information provided. Particular attention will be paid to the conditions under which the assessment was being delivered; the information provided to the student about those conditions; and whether the student was aware that the assessment might be used to determine their grade in the summer 2022 series.

Can teacher and centre malpractice occur and if so what should we do?

Yes, malpractice could occur as these assessments might be used to determine students' grades.

Teachers might – either inadvertently or otherwise – commit malpractice by doing such things as providing improper assistance to students (including providing too much information about the content of assessments), fabricating student evidence or knowingly giving higher marks for student work than warranted.

Centres could commit malpractice by failing to take reasonable steps to follow the published guidance, including by not retaining evidence or not ensuring completed assessments are authentically the students' own.

Any instances of teacher or centre malpractice and maladministration must be reported immediately to the relevant awarding organisation in the normal way using the JCQ M2 Form (the form and further details can be found in the [JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures](#)). The awarding organisation will then provide further guidance on the next steps, including details of any sanctions to be applied.

If a student commits malpractice, should we give 0 marks?

No, please report the incident to the relevant awarding organisation which will then provide further guidance on the next steps, including details of any sanctions to be applied.

If a student commits malpractice, should we get them to complete another assessment?

No, please report the incident to the relevant awarding organisation which will then provide further guidance on the next steps, including details of any sanctions to be applied.

Can candidates take these assessments remotely (i.e. online and not within the centre)?

The preferred way for these assessments to be delivered is by in-person assessments. However, the awarding organisations recognise that due to public health guidance changes, the need to cater for private candidates, and students' mitigating circumstances, there may be valid reasons in exceptional circumstances for an assessment to be conducted online.

If this happens the centre must ensure that students are fully aware of the conditions under which they are completing the assessment and that any form of wrongdoing might constitute malpractice. Centres must take reasonable steps to ensure the integrity of the assessment, for example ensuring the student is appropriately supervised and that the completed assessment is authentically the student's own.