

JOINT PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION AND UNION RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS FOR AWARDING GCSES, AS, A-LEVELS AND VTQS IN SUMMER 2021

This document sets out the **core principles and processes** that our organisations agree should underpin the awarding of grades this summer. This document should be read alongside the detailed answers and proposals each organisation has submitted in our individual responses to the consultations.

What grades in 2021 should mean

- Grades this year would ideally reflect what a student knows, understands and can do in a subject.
- This standard should be set by awarding organisations in each subject as a matter of priority; the standard for each grade does not currently exist. There must be consistency across different awarding organisations.
- The assessment of this standard should be on content that students have been taught, to account for differential lost learning because of the pandemic, and take into account the coverage of assessment objectives over content.
- Assessment should allow students of all ability levels to demonstrate their achievement.
- This means that, although students may have studied less of the course than usual due to the pandemic, they are still able to demonstrate a standard of work in the content they have been taught.

Assessment of students

- The assessment of students should be based on school or college's assessment, using a holistic range of evidence. The use of which would be subject to clear criteria that can be consistently applied.
- The language of 'teacher assessment' is unhelpful and undermines the internal quality assurance that schools and colleges will be expected to undertake.
- Awarding organisations will provide guidance for each qualification detailing the types of evidence that schools and colleges can use to reach their decision.
- Whilst being flexible enough to allow for teachers and leaders to exercise their professional judgements there must be due regard to workload pressures and the time available.
- A standardised framework will help ensure some consistency and standardisation within and across schools and colleges.
- Awarding organisations should provide support, guidance and assessment materials to help inform school and college assessments.
- Within the framework, schools and colleges should be trusted to exercise professional judgement in the inferences they make about assessments, and how these inform final grading.
- This includes the inferences they make about assessments collected before the third national lockdown.

Internal quality assurance

- Internal quality assurance processes must be designed in such a way that they are manageable for schools and colleges and their staff; and sufficient time must be given to engage meaningfully with the process.
- Schools and colleges should be given clear and consistent guidance from awarding organisations about how to conduct internal quality assurance, including the administration of any external assessment materials.
- Schools and colleges should ensure that students with protected characteristics are not disadvantaged in this process and they should be given the appropriate support, guidance and training to help ensure this.

External quality assurance

- All schools and colleges may be moderated and required to provide evidence to the exam board for the grades they have submitted for some students.
- Awarding organisations will use a range of risk assessments to see whether a school or college's submitted grades look unusual. They may require greater quality assurance checks from these schools and colleges.
- Any changes to submitted grades must be made as a result of human agency and discussion, rather than through statistical manipulation.
- Awarding organisations should only issue grades when they are satisfied that the grades are valid and reliable.
- No grade should be issued to students without prior sight of their school or college, and the opportunity for schools and colleges to question a grade before results are published to students and universities.

Appeals

- Awarding organisations retain responsibility for issuing grades. They should only issue grades when they are confident the grades are reliable and valid. Appeals should therefore be made directly to awarding organisations, as the responsible bodies.

Timings

- Final submission of grades should take place as late in the school year as possible to maximise teaching time, without comprising on the time of normal results days or the robustness of internal or external quality assurance.

Technical and Vocational qualifications

- It is desirable to have consistency between the approaches to awarding GCSE, AS, A level, other general qualifications, and vocational and technical qualifications, while acknowledging that VTQs are assessed in different ways.
- Consideration must be given to how best to support schools and colleges to prepare and assess students taking practical, competency/licence to practise qualifications.

Workload

- Within the options set out in the consultation, certain policy choices would lead to an increase in workload that would fall disproportionately on school and college staff. It should be made clear what steps the government would take to mitigate this impact.

Equality impact assessment

- Ofqual should carry out a thorough and holistic equality impact assessment of grades, across all qualifications (GQs and VTQs). This should include analysis by institution type and size, qualification type, level, socio-economic background and protected characteristics.