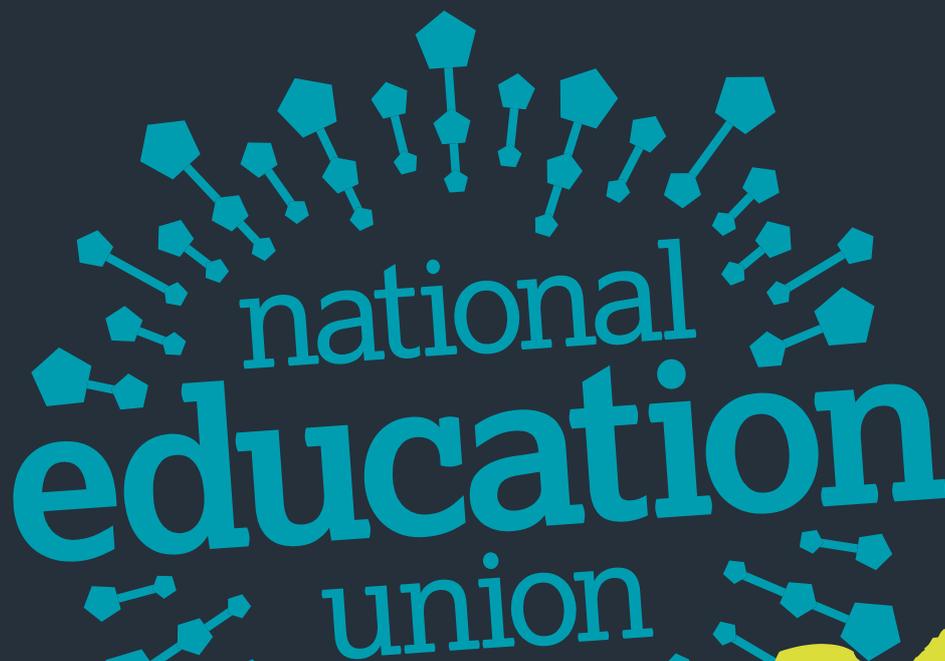


Exams guidance

# Planning to award grades in summer 2021



**#FAIRGRADE2021**

# Planning to award grades in summer 2021

This guidance is for the awarding of GCSE, AS and A- Levels, and those vocational and technical qualifications considered to be similar, eg BTECs and Cam Techs, in Summer 2021

We are still waiting for the final technical details from Ofqual on the Alternative Awarding Framework, and from awarding organisations their procedural requirements and subject specific guidance. Until that guidance is available, members should continue to focus on teaching and learning, and should not be under pressure to begin collecting evidence or making grading decisions.

However, some policy decisions have been made by Government about how to award grades this summer, and members should begin to hold conversations in order to make sure there will be sufficient time available for the work that will need to be done.

**#FAIRGRADE2021**

**The following outlines the definite parts of the process that we know and the things that should be considered at this stage:**

## **Agree internal process**

Each school and college will need to agree the process that will be used in each subject to give grades (including the types of evidence used, the internal quality assurance and how grade judgements will be objective).

Leaders and heads of department should consider, from the outset and as a part of agreeing the process, how teachers will be freed up to engage with this at times during the Summer term when key tasks, such as setting and marking evidence of student performance, need to be completed.

## **Gather evidence**

Once the process is decided, teachers will need to collect and consider the agreed evidence of student performance in order to give a grade. Further specific information about the types of evidence and guidance on how to come to a grade is expected from exam boards as soon as possible and we continue to push them for this.

Any assessments or pieces of evidence considered must only be on topics the student has covered. You should agree up front which topics will be assessed as a part of a subject's process.

Any additional tasks needed to gather evidence – such as the setting or marking of exam-style questions/papers and coursework or other pieces of work – should be given time which is planned in advance, as a part of the agreed process.

## **Suggest a grade for each student**

Once the agreed evidence of student performance is gathered, teachers must be allowed time to balance this evidence and come to their holistic grade judgements (with support from the grade descriptors, mark schemes and guidance to follow from boards).



## Discuss grades internally

Each school and college will then need to internally quality assure their grades. Specific guidance and expectations around this will follow from boards but this will include discussing the evidence across class groups and students to confirm there is consistency about what was used and how it was used.

Heads of Department/Centre may also look at wider ranges of information in order to ensure they meet the exam board's requirements for internal quality assurance.

## Submit grades to boards

After the internal quality assurance is complete and the Head of Centre has signed off a department's grades they can then be sent to exam boards. Final grades must be submitted by 18 June.

## External quality assurance

Exam boards will carry out their own quality assurance on the grades, some of which may take place before grades are submitted (for example signing off a school or college's internal quality assurance and sampling the evidence of student performance a school or college is using).

## Students receive grades

Once exam boards have completed their external quality assurance and approve the grades they will then be awarded to students on results days – which this year are 10 August for AS and A-level students and 12 August for GCSEs. These arrangements also apply to VTQs such as BTECs and Cam Techs.

Timelines for each stage of the process are yet to be confirmed but it is likely that a lot of the work for teachers will be in the first half of the summer term. A centre's final grades,

after internal quality assurance and head of centre sign off, must be submitted to boards by 18 June.

# NEU advice

The earlier you plan as a whole school or college, the more likely you are to avoid excessive workload. Your timetable for the summer term should already include sufficient time to undertake this duty.

Work together to map out the time that you will need to prepare, gather, mark and judge evidence of student performance, as well as then being involved in the internal quality assurance.

Be as specific as possible, both in the amount of time you will need, and the dates by which the work needs to be done.

Make sure you are following the Ofqual and awarding organisation guidance, and that you are not doing more than is required.

Agree this plan with your head of department and head of centre.

Agree amongst members in your school and college and with leadership/heads of department what tasks you might normally do within directed time that can be postponed around peak points for the grading process.

Some suggestions might include:

- ▶ **A break in assessing and marking other work or books from other year groups**
- ▶ **Parents evenings not being planned in the weeks when aspects of the grading process are taking place**
- ▶ **No requirement to attend staff meetings or assemblies**
- ▶ **No requirement for additional duties at the beginning and end of the day**

However, it may be a better use of time to find ways to free up larger blocks of time, by extending planned PPA time for example. It may well be that your school or college needs to employ additional staff, for example supply teachers, to free up time for this important work. You may wish to explore with the SLT whether there will be entry fee rebates from the exam boards, or other ways of releasing additional budget.

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