

GUIDANCE

Changes to awarding of GCSE, AS and A level, Extended Project Qualification and Advanced Extension Award in maths – summer 2020

Guidance for teachers, students, parents and carers following a decision to issue results using centre assessment grades or calculated results where higher

20 August 2020

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Introduction

On 17 August 2020 [we announced that, for GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Extended Project Qualification \(EPQ\) and Advanced Extension Award \(AEA\) in maths this summer, students would be awarded either their centre assessment grade or the calculated grade, whichever is higher.](#)

We understand this has been a distressing time for students. The pandemic has created circumstances no one could have ever imagined or wished for. We have taken this decision to remove as much stress and uncertainty for young people as possible - and to free up head teachers and teachers to work towards the important task of getting all schools open in 2 weeks.

This guidance aims to provide teachers, students, parents and carers with answers to some immediate questions about how grades are now being awarded in summer 2020.

Which qualifications are covered?

This information is relevant to all students and exam centres in England using the following qualifications regulated by Ofqual and offered by AQA, OCR, Pearson, WJEC Eduqas, ASDAN and City & Guilds:

- GCSEs (including short course GCSEs)
- AS and A levels
- Extended Project Qualifications (EPQ)
- Advanced Extension Awards (AEA) in maths

How were centre assessment grades determined?

Centre assessment grades (CAGs) were submitted by schools or colleges and are the grades they judged a student would have been most likely to achieve if they had sat an exam.

We asked schools and colleges to use their professional experience to make a fair and objective judgement of the grade they believed a student would have achieved had they sat their exams this year.

Where calculated grades are higher than CAGs, calculated grades will be awarded. These grades have been standardised.

Awarding AS and A levels

Will A level students now receive their centre assessment grade instead of their calculated grade?

The change in approach will be applied retrospectively. AS and A level students will now receive their centre assessment grade (CAG) as their final result, if it is higher than their calculated grade. Exam boards have provided these results to centres - students should contact their school or college to get their results.

What happens if a student's centre assessment grade is lower than the calculated grade already received?

In cases where the calculated grade is higher than the centre assessment grade (CAG), the higher of the 2 will be the final result.

Students should speak to their school or college to find out their CAG, if they don't already know it

How will this change affect university admissions?

We, and the Department of Education, are discussing this change with UCAS and representatives of higher education to do everything possible to support students. Students should first contact the relevant college or university if they believe their centre assessment grade impacts on their admission.

Awarding GCSEs

Are GCSE results still being issued on Thursday 20 August?

Students will receive their GCSE results on Thursday as planned.

Will GCSE students be issued their centre assessment grades or their calculated grades?

Students' final results will be the higher of their centre assessment grade or calculated grade.

Exam boards are updating results in time for 20 August, so the results students see that day will be the higher of the 2.

What happens if a student's centre assessment grade is lower than the calculated grade?

In cases where a student's centre assessment grade is lower than their calculated grade, the higher of the 2 will be the final result.

Appeals

Are there routes of appeal still open?

Schools and colleges can only appeal where there has been an administrative error with the CAG or rank order information. Rank order information was vital to support standardisation, but any change to a student's position in the rank order would not change the student's CAG.

Administrative errors might include, for example, mixing up 2 students with similar names, or accidentally copying across the wrong data, but do not relate to the professional judgements of centres in assigning CAGs.

Centres cannot appeal against the CAG that they decided was correct at the point of submitting it to the exam board, and for which the head of centre submitted a declaration to confirm that in the centre's judgement this was the grade the students were most likely to have received had the exams gone ahead.

If a student is concerned that any reasonable adjustments were not taken into account when their school or college determined their CAG, they should discuss this with their school or college.

Can a student appeal to receive their mock grade?

The decision to issue students the higher of their CAG or their calculated grades means that a route to appeal on the grounds of mock exam results is not available. Mock exam results were part of the evidence schools centre took into account when determining CAGs for their students.

What if students have concerns about bias impacting on centre assessment grades?

As we have said previously, if students or others have concerns about bias, discrimination or any other factor that suggests that a centre did not behave with care or integrity when determining the centre assessment grade and/or rank order information they should normally raise these concerns with their centre, in the first instance; or they could take their concerns to the relevant exam board if this was the more appropriate route.

Where there is evidence, [we require exam boards to investigate such allegations as potential malpractice or maladministration](#). Such allegations would be very serious, and we expect them to be rare.

Autumn exam series

Will there still be an exam series in the autumn?

The autumn exam series will still go ahead as planned. Entry to autumn exams will be open to all students who had entered for GCSEs, AS and A levels in the summer series and to those who the exam board believes have made a compelling case about their intention to have entered the summer series. Students who would normally be entitled to take GCSEs in English language and maths in November will also be able to take exams in those subjects.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Does this change apply to vocational and technical qualifications?

This change does not apply to other general and vocational or technical qualifications.

There are a large number of awarding organisations that deliver many thousands of qualifications. As a result, awarding organisations have developed their approaches to awarding this year that are most appropriate for their vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs).

The statistical standardisation approach, which had been used in A levels and GCSEs, was not used by awarding organisations in most VTQs. Most VTQs are structured differently to A levels and GCSEs, and so the approach to awarding developed by awarding organisations has also been different.

In the majority of VTQs, awarding organisations were able to use evidence of work already completed during the course, and use this as a basis for calculating the results they issued. This has meant that results have been calculated from a trusted evidence base that includes completed assessments. Indeed, for many qualifications, learners have taken adapted assessments and so there was no calculation process needed at all. Of those qualifications where awarding organisations did use calculation, not all used centre assessment grades. And where centre assessment grades were used, awarding organisations did so in a range of ways, usually as one of a number of sources of evidence and often at unit level rather than qualification level. This means that where centre assessment grades were used in VTQs, they had less influence on the final grade.

That's why we have seen little divergence between the results that schools and colleges thought learners would get, and the results that have been issued for the majority of qualifications awarded this year. Awarding organisations have largely not found it necessary to moderate their results down based on statistical standardisation.

BTECS and other level 2 and 3 qualifications

Those few awarding organisations that used statistical modelling to determine the result have considered what the changes with A levels and GCSEs mean for their qualifications. We have been informed that a small number of awarding organisations are going to reissue results as a result.

Those awarding organisations that used qualification-level centre assessment grades have been able to recalculate results and issue them on time. Others will need more time, because their approach is more complex.

OCR have said that their Cambridge National results will issue next week. Pearson, which initially did not think there would need to be significant changes made, has now decided to revise its arrangements to ensure that student qualification-level results better reflect the unit-level results that students have already secured through

internally-assessed units. We have been assured by awarding organisations that no grades will be reduced as a result of this process.

Awarding organisations are working as quickly as possible to confirm results as soon as possible, recognising the impact that delays are having on schools, colleges and students. No learner's result will go down as a consequence of regrading.

If students have questions about vocational and technical qualifications they are taking, they should first speak to their school, college or training provider. There is more information about the [grading of vocational and technical qualifications](#) on our website.



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