

Guidance on the Centre Assessment Grades process for summer 2020

Version 3.1

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1. Introduction

Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQs) are within the scope of Ofqual's VTQ extraordinary regulatory framework for summer 2020. It is government policy that candidates due to take assessments for Functional Skills qualifications before the end of the summer should receive a **calculated result** rather than an adapted or postponed assessment where there is sufficient evidence to support this.

So that as many candidates as possible can receive a result in summer 2020, the process needs to provide a safe and valid outcome which reflects the result that the candidate is likely to have received if they had been able to complete the assessment.

We have been working with Ofqual and other Awarding Organisations (AOs) which offer legacy and reformed versions of Functional Skills qualifications (FSQs) through the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) to establish common requirements and guidance for calculating grades in summer 2020. This OCR guidance builds upon that work.

The process involves staff in each centre considering any relevant evidence they have and providing centre assessment grades for eligible candidates. We will then check these submissions.

This guidance is intended to help centres to:

- determine who they should submit centre assessment grades for; and
- make decisions about the grades to submit.

The agreed requirements mean that, although systems for submitting grades and some guidance may vary by AO, in general the process for calculating Functional Skills component grades will be the same for all candidates.

Key terms:

Assessment - refers to the exam or internal assessment relevant to the component.

Calculated result - the final outcome issued for a candidate by OCR.

Centre assessment grade - the teachers/assessors' professional judgement of the grade a candidate would most likely have achieved this summer, if learning had continued as normal. These are the grades you submit to us.

Component – Maths and ICT FSQs only have one component at each level, however in English reading, writing and Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC) are separate components.

Protected characteristics - are defined by the 2010 Equality Act as, age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

2. Scope

a) Qualifications

This guidance covers centre assessment grades for the following qualifications.

Legacy	Maths English ICT	At all levels (Entry 1 to Level 2).
Reformed	Maths English	At all levels (Entry 1 to Level 2).

b) Eligible candidates

Centres should submit centre assessment grades for all FSQ candidates affected by the Covid-19 disruption **who they would expect to have taken the assessment / exam between 20 March and 31 July**. This includes:

- Candidates attempting the assessment for the first time
- Candidates resitting the assessment

We acknowledge that under normal circumstances some candidates may have attempted assessment more than once during this period.

Centres must **NOT** submit centre assessment grades for any candidate they would not expect to have taken the exam / assessment during this period.

Where any candidates have completed assessments **since 20th March 2020**:

- If you have submitted claims to OCR, then these need to be processed completely before any candidates involved can be considered for centre assessment grades. If you have outstanding claims, contact us to check their progress before you complete and submit your grades.
- Candidates receiving results for their completed assessments who have not passed could still be included in the centre assessment grades submission. Centres need to consider how close to the required pass mark the candidate was on their latest attempt (where this is known) and what other evidence there is which supports proposing a grade of 'Pass' for that candidate.
- If assessment has been completed but not claimed/submitted to OCR, centres should use the completed assessment as part of their evidence in judging a grade for the candidates in question (rather than trying to complete the assessment process in the usual way) and include these candidates in their centre assessment grades submission to OCR.
- If candidates have completed a paper based exam but the answer booklets/question papers have not been sent to the OCR examiner they must be held in the centre's

secure storage until they can be safely returned to OCR. These completed exams will not be marked and remain confidential. They must not be accessed by anyone before they are returned to OCR. Centres should submit centre assessment grades for these candidates.

c) Component submissions

Centres must submit centre assessment grades at the component level.

FS Qualification	Component structure
English	Three separate components at each level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC)
Mathematics	Single component at each level. For the reformed qualifications, this component is assessed in two sections; a non-calculator section and a calculator section. You only submit one grade covering both sections combined.
ICT	Single component at each level

d) Centre assessment grades required by subject:

- The following components are assessed by **exam**:
 - Maths Level 1 and 2
 - English Reading Level 1 and 2
 - English Writing Level 1 and 2
 - ICT Level 1 and 2

For these, the centre must:

- identify eligible candidates
- submit an evidence-based judgement of whether each eligible candidate would **pass OR fail** the component.

- The following components are assessed **internally**:
 - all components in all FSQs at Entry Level
 - Speaking Listening and Communication at Level 1 and 2;

For these, the centre must:

- identify eligible candidates
- submit an evidence-based judgement about which eligible candidates would have **passed the assessment**. The centre **must not** submit a grade for those candidates who they judge would not have been ready to complete the assessment or would not have been likely to pass if they had completed the assessment.

When grades have been judged for all eligible candidates for a particular component within a centre, the following should be recorded for each component:

- a) Total number of candidates for whom a grade has been judged
- b) Total number for whom a 'pass' is recommended

- c) Total number for whom a 'fail' is recommended (where applicable)
- d) The types of evidence used for each candidate to support the process.
- e) Standardisation records (if applicable)

The grades for each candidate and a-e above should be passed to the Head of Centre for checking before they are submitted to OCR.

We may need to see the evidence and records used to support judgement of centre assessment grades. You must keep all of this for a **minimum of six months** after the release of results unless we tell you otherwise.

You should also keep records of candidate enrolment and attendance records for six months after the release of results.

e) Terms governing the centre assessment grade process for FSQs

The following terms governing this process have been agreed by all Awarding Organisations (AOs) offering FSQs:

1. This is a one-off, time-limited process offered to minimise disruption caused by measures taken by government in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. The aim is that, as far as possible, candidates due to take assessments during this period are not disadvantaged.
2. Centres are only allowed to make **one** submission. This must cover all eligible candidates expected to take FSQ assessment between 20 March and 31 July 2020.
3. Once a centre has made a submission, OCR will not consider any subsequent submission by that centre (except if OCR requests this to resolve issues).
4. There will be no second submission for candidates judged not likely to have 'passed'. For externally assessed components, OCR will offer all candidates who do not pass the component an opportunity to sit the exam as soon as possible after the candidate's final calculated result has been released.
5. Subject to the outcome of Ofqual's consultation *on Exceptional Arrangements for Assessment and Grading in 2020 (VTQs)*, for final calculated results that have been approved by OCR, there will be no right of appeal by the centre or candidate against the **result**. An appeal based on whether the **process** was followed will be offered.
6. We reserve the right to review evidence used by centres to reach judgements about centre assessment grades on request. This will take place as part of quality assurance of the centre's submission or through other quality assurance activity at a later point.
7. As part of quality assurance of a centre's submission, we will not take action to change or adjust grades for any candidate but we may ask the centre to reconsider its submitted grades if we have any concerns.
8. We will support centres in resolving quality assurance concerns (see section 5) about their submission. However, we will **reject** all or part of the submission if these cannot be resolved.
9. It is expected that for various reasons related to the current situation some centres may not be able to participate. For example:
 - Centres with furloughed staff
 - Centres who are operating at the limits of their capacity, for example healthcare providers.

In such cases, we will make every effort to minimise disadvantage. However, delaying assessment until a later time may be the only option.

We intend to provide an assessment opportunity for each Functional Skills component across both legacy and reformed qualifications in the autumn term of 2020 (assuming that circumstances in schools, colleges and other providers allow this).

Centre assessment grades must remain confidential. Centre staff must not release them to candidates (or their parents/carers) before the issue of results by OCR. Incidents of grades being released will be investigated as suspected malpractice. Centres should refer to [JCQ Guidance on malpractice for summer awarding 2020](#).

f) Timelines

15 June – 6 July	Centre assessment grades produced and submitted by centres
July – early August	Processing, resolution of issues, results calculation
20 August	Results release

3. The Centre assessment grades process

The aim of this process is to enable as many candidates as possible who would have been completing Functional Skills assessments this summer to be awarded a result.

We recognise that this is a challenging process for you. We need to work together to minimise the number of candidates whose progress is delayed. However, this must not be at the expense of the integrity and validity of these results, or, by association previous and future results. We need you to help us achieve this through the centre assessment grades process.

We need to make sure that end users value these results as equivalent to those achieved at any other time. So they need to be realistic and based on sufficient evidence and the numbers achieving outcomes need to stand up to scrutiny in the context of historical performance.

It is vital that you carefully consider the strength and reliability of evidence that you have so that grades are appropriate. If you do not have enough evidence to make valid judgments, you should not propose grades in those circumstances.

If these things are not achieved, there is a risk that:

- Individual candidates lack important skills when they move to further study or employment
- The candidate results issued are not held in the same esteem as those achieved through the usual live assessment
- Confidence in FSQs is undermined.

No one wants their progress to be delayed. However, it is not in the best interests of candidates to be awarded results indicating that they can function at a level they will not be able to demonstrate to at least a reasonable extent.

For each candidate in the submission, we will require you to:

- indicate the types of evidence that you based your judgment on
- provide supporting information about how you used the evidence to make judgments for each component.

You do not need to submit the candidate evidence itself along with your grades, however we may request it during the process and it must be retained until six months after results are released.

We have a regulatory obligation to check overall outcomes for these qualifications against previous years. We will therefore check each centre's submissions against historic data for the centre, both in terms of past achievement rates and numbers completing assessments.

You will also have to confirm that you have considered historic achievement rates and past centre performance in arriving at your submitted centre assessment grades. You will need to account for any variations in what you are proposing for summer 2020 compared to this past performance.

a) Before judging centre assessment grades

Teachers involved in the process must be familiar with:

- The guidance on the process issued by OCR.
- The standards for the Functional Skills subject and level being assessed. You can be access these from Ofqual's website:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/functional-skills-qualifications-requirements>
 - For legacy Maths, English and ICT FSQs, the relevant legacy criteria should be used.
 - For Maths and English candidates using reformed FSQs from September 2019, the standards are published within the Conditions and Requirements documents as appendices.
- For legacy and reformed Maths and English at levels 1 and 2, the common pass descriptors and supporting information provided by OCR (separate document)
- Ofqual Guidance for Heads of Centre, Heads of Department and teachers on objectivity in grading and ranking:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/885337/Guidance_on_objectivity_in_grading_and_ranking_15MAY2020.pdf

b) Guidance for teachers judging candidates' centre assessment grades

Only candidates affected by the Covid-19 disruption are eligible to have centre assessment grades submitted (see section 2b). Teachers should identify eligible candidates before starting the process of judging candidate grades.

You should only submit grades for those candidates where there is **at least one valid piece of supporting evidence** available (see Section 3e).

Only teachers with direct experience of teaching the subject and component to the candidate should judge that candidate's grade.

The teacher should consider each eligible candidate in turn. For each candidate whose grade is being judged, the teacher should consider:

- the assessment requirements of the component
- all of the evidence available that demonstrates the candidate's ability and progress towards the assessment requirements of the component (remember there must be **at least one** piece of valid evidence available for a candidate in order to submit a centre assessment grade – see Section 3e for details)
- the pass descriptor for the component being considered (where available)
- their knowledge of the candidate's ability
- any permitted support that would have been given to that candidate in completing the assessment (at Entry level)
- any access arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments that would have been made to the assessment for that candidate in respect of a specific need or disability
- the level of confidence they have in the candidate's ability to perform at a level close to that indicated by the awarding of a 'Pass' grade.

Using their professional expertise, the teacher must reach a considered judgement about whether that candidate would have passed the component if their learning and progression had not been disrupted and they had taken the assessment in the usual way. We acknowledge that in many cases the evidence used may only show partial achievement of the component's requirements given the disruption to the scheduled programme of learning.

Teachers should bear in mind the candidate's progression aim when providing a 'pass' grade. A 'pass' means they believe that, in relation to the required skills, the candidate would be able to:

- progress to the next FSQ level or
- operate adequately in an educational or employment setting.

In some cases, the teacher may consider that a candidate would have been on the borderline between passing and failing the assessment. Where it is difficult to reach a definitive judgement, we recommend that teachers:

- discuss this as part of standardisation (see section 3c)
- use the pass descriptor and/or supporting guidance provided (where this is available for the component being considered)
- compare the evidence for that candidate with other candidates felt to be around the borderline but where it was possible to reach a pass or fail decision.

We also recommend that teachers record borderline decisions. These can then be reconsidered when the centre checks the overall profile of the centre assessment grades for the component against previous performance.

The teacher(s) judgement and the evidence used for each candidate must be recorded as part of the submission documents and the evidence retained for a minimum of six months after results are released.

Where more than one teacher is responsible for teaching a subject / component at a particular level, they should work together to standardise their judgement (see section 3c). Similarly, where more than one teacher is responsible for teaching a candidate for a

component, those teachers should work together to reach a judgement about the candidate's centre assessment grade.

c) Standardisation

Where more than one teacher is responsible for delivering a component within the centre and involved in judging centre assessment grades for that component, then these teachers must work together to standardise their judgements.

If one teacher is making the grade decisions for a component, it would be good practice for them to ask a suitable colleague to sense-check their decision making as part of the centres internal process. This helps to check consistency of approach and minimise any risk of unconscious bias. Where a centre is making grade judgments across multiple components or qualifications, those making the judgments should be consistent in the process they follow, even if they are judging different subjects.

At the start of the process, teachers should individually consider an initial sample of candidates and make provisional judgements about whether each would pass or fail. Any candidates who are felt to be on the borderline of pass and fail should be noted. Before judging any further centre assessment grades, the teachers should collaborate to discuss and compare their grades, the evidence used, and the judgement applied so that they can agree on how they are judging the grades.

As a result of this process, teachers may revisit judgements reached about the initial sample of candidates.

The teachers should then complete judgement for all candidates. They may wish to continue to discuss any borderline decisions with colleagues as required.

Teachers must record **all** standardisation discussions/decisions. The centre must keep these records along with any other evidence used in the process of determining centre assessment grades. The documents and evidence must be kept for a minimum of six months after results are released.

d) Equalities, reasonable adjustments and reducing the risk of bias

Judgements must be made in an impartial, balanced and unbiased way. The assessment grades must be based on evidence of each candidates' expected likely level of attainment.

Every effort must be made to ensure that vulnerable candidates or those with special educational needs or protected characteristics are not disadvantaged.

Candidates must not be systematically advantaged or disadvantaged by the centre assessment grades process due to any factor that does not relate to their knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the subject (for example their behaviour, character, appearance, social background or any specific needs).

Centres must also manage any Conflicts of Interest (COI) within the centre to ensure such judgements are fair and unbiased.

In normal circumstances, any reasonable adjustment or access arrangement agreed for a candidate is realised through:

- the conditions in which the assessment is taken
- support allowed during the assessment.

Without live assessment in its usual sense this summer, it is vital that centres consider how these factors would have influenced the likely outcome for eligible candidates as part of their centre assessment grades process and keep a record of this.

e) Evidence

All available evidence should be used. The **minimum requirement for judging a candidate's grade is that there must be one piece of valid evidence available for that candidate.**

For each candidate, the teacher(s) judging the centre assessment grade must consider all available valid evidence which demonstrates the candidate's progress towards the learning aims of the qualification and supports a judgement about whether the candidate would pass or fail the component.

We recommend that the minimum evidence requirements are exceeded and that there is more than one source of evidence is used to support the judgment for each candidate, especially where the teacher determines that in their view the candidate would have passed. This judgment needs to be supported and the teacher needs to be confident that the candidate is secure enough in their ability to continue with the next stage of their education or employment.

The following are considered to be the valid forms of evidence that should be used to support judgement, where these are available:

- A. Previous attempts at the live exam (based on feedback previously supplied by OCR).
- B. Previous centre-marked attempts at Functional Skills practice tests.
- C. Formative assessment results. Formative assessment is defined as assessment undertaken to check learning has taken place and assess progress towards the FS level. This can be centre-devised or a commercially-available product. This does **not** include initial and diagnostic assessment (see F below).
- D. Any other work which the candidate has completed towards the qualification (such as work they have done in class or at home independently).
- E. Candidate work demonstrating the skills assessed by FS qualifications that has been completed in support of another qualification learning aim.
- F. Results of initial and diagnostic assessment can be used but only in the following ways:
 - As a benchmark to gauge progress made towards the component requirements by the candidate.
 - Where it provides evidence that the candidate had already met one or more of the component's assessed requirements when the initial / diagnostic assessment was taken.

In the majority of cases, evidence types A, B and C will generally be stronger and more reliable indicators than evidence types D, E and F.

Evidence types A-F cover all the potential types of candidate evidence which centres may have to support grades. If teachers have a form of evidence which they are not sure quite fits within a categories, they should place it in the most appropriate type as they see it and detail this as part of the submission documents.

As noted earlier, teachers must bear in mind the candidate's progression when providing a 'pass' grade for a candidate. They must be reasonably confident that, in relation to the skills being considered, the candidate would be able to progress to the next FSQ level or in employment in order to propose a Pass grade.

4. Role of the Head of Centre

The Head of Centre must sign off all of the centre assessment grades submitted by their centre for all qualifications and subjects. This is in the form of a declaration confirming that the process has been followed in full.

The Head of Centre must complete one declaration for each Awarding Organisation. In doing so, they are confirming that the centre assessment process for Functional Skills Qualifications has been carried out as detailed in this guidance.

The Head of Centre is responsible for making sure:

- Only staff who have taught the candidate have judged that candidate's grade.
- All staff who are judging grades are briefed and familiar with the process and requirements as outlined in this document and associated materials to support the process (see 3a)
- That there is sufficient valid evidence available to underpin the judgements to be made by teachers **before** any grades are judged.
- That teacher judgement takes into account any access arrangements and reasonable adjustments that would be made to the assessment where a candidate would have been entitled to these in the normal course of assessment.
- That judgements are evidence-based and free of any bias in respect of any candidate with a protected characteristic or any other factor (for example character, appearance, social background or special educational needs) that does not relate to their knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the subject.
- That where more than one member of staff is involved in teaching an individual candidate for any component, that these members of staff work together to standardise their judgements and approach in relation to the grade.

The Head of Centre must contact OCR to discuss options before any centre assessment grade is judged where no member of staff is available who has taught any candidate whose component grade is being judged.

Grades must not be submitted based on judgements made by staff other than those who have taught the candidate the component for which the grade is submitted.

Centre assessment grades must not be submitted for any candidate where there is **no valid evidence** on which to base the judgement.

Once the process has been completed, the Head of Centre must approve a single submission covering all FSQ candidates whose grades they plan to submit. This must be a single submission covering all FSQ components that the centre intends to submit grades for

at all levels offered for both legacy and reformed qualifications (where applicable). The submission of the centre assessment grades and supporting information cannot be staggered by component or submitted as multiple 'batches' of candidates.

For the purposes of these qualifications, in completing the Head of Centre declaration and submitting centre assessment grades to OCR, the Centre is confirming the following requirements have been met:

- for all candidates, that:
 - where a grade is submitted, only staff with experience of teaching that component to the candidate provided their grade
 - at least one piece of valid evidence per candidate was used to reach the judgement for each component grade
- an indication of the types of evidence used for each candidate has been provided
- an overview of how evidence has been used has been provided for each component
- the Head of Centre has overseen a check comparing the numbers and proportions of pass and fail grades for each component with expectations about how each cohort of candidates would perform under normal circumstances (see below)
- details are provided for any factors which account for divergence between historic achievement rates and the achievement profile of the grades is provided.

Checking the submission

This process covers any FSQ assessment which would have taken place between 20 March 2020 and 31 July 2020.

As part of a final check ahead of submitting centre assessment grades to OCR, the Head of Centre must oversee the following comparisons between the summer 2020 submissions proposed and previous centre activity.

For all components

A comparison between:

- the number of grades submitted for each component and
- the number of results they submitted for each component for an equivalent historic period (e.g. 20 March 2019 – 31 July 2019). Approximate figures may be used where it is not possible to generate exact figures.

Any variance between the two for any component should be noted and explained as part of the submission.

For examined components

A comparison between the numbers and proportions of pass and fail grades for each component with expectations about how each cohort of candidates would perform under normal circumstances.

A comparison with previous centre records for an equivalent period of time (e.g. 20 March 2019 – 31 July 2019) should be used for this where possible. The extent of the similarity or difference should be noted and any factors which the centre feel account for any variation detailed as part of the submission.

5. Quality Assurance of centre assessment grades

When you submit your centre assessment grades to OCR for consideration, you will provide us with:

- Your grades for eligible candidates by component, as detailed in this document.
- An indication of the types of evidence upon which you based your judgment for each candidate.
- Supporting information about how you used the evidence available to make the judgments for each component.
- Confirmation that historic achievement rates and past centre performance have been considered in arriving at your grades, and that any variations in what you are proposing for summer 2020 through the centre assessment grades process are justified.

We will review your submission to decide if the proposed grades look reasonable against our records of what has happened previously. We will check the overview of the candidate evidence used and the other supporting information about how the centre assessment grades decisions were made.

It is important that you have due regard for how your submissions compare to previous levels of activity and performance in FSQs at your centre. We will review the centre assessment grades against data such as:

- the number of centre assessment grades submitted for each component and
- the number of results submitted for each component for an equivalent historic period (e.g. 20 March 2019 – 31 July 2019)
- the achievement rate of centre assessment grades for each component and
- the achievement rate for an equivalent historic period (e.g. 20 March 2019 – 31 July 2019).

Where a submission shows that the guidance has been followed; there is valid evidence upon which judgments have been based and grades look reasonable in the context of historic performance, the submission will generally be accepted in good faith.

If we have concerns, we may ask for more information or ask you to review your submission. You will have an opportunity to review and revise the submission or to provide additional justification for it. We may ask for some or all of the candidate evidence as part of this process. If you cannot provide evidence when requested, this may also be investigated as suspected malpractice and may result in sanctions or penalties against the centre and/or individuals. We follow the process of investigation outlined in the JCQ *Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures 2019/20*, which still applies in this situation.

Centres should also refer to [JCQ Guidance on malpractice for summer awarding 2020](#) which provides further guidance on issues that are likely to result in a suspected malpractice investigation.

Ultimately, where proposed centre assessment grades are not felt to be justifiable, we may reject some or all of those proposed. In these circumstances, you will have access to an appeal process about the procedures we have followed. Where candidates affected have not been able to be issued with the result they require to progress, they will have the opportunity to undertake live assessment in the autumn.