

# *Determining grades* for Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals in summer 2021

## Determining grades for Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals in summer 2021

In February 2021, the Department for Education (the DfE) and Ofqual confirmed that your students taking our Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals will receive grades based on teacher judgements this summer. This process will be very similar to how grades will be awarded to GCSEs and A Levels to ensure parity across the qualifications

To help you generate and submit teacher assessed grades (TAGs) successfully and support your students to progress on to their next stage of their lives, we'll provide guidance each step of the way. We're working closely with Ofqual, the DfE and other awarding organisations so our guidance is up to date, as consistent as possible with other boards, and meets the latest regulatory requirements.

This first guidance document explains how to make your judgements that form the basis for TAGs. It covers the evidence you should use, how to collect and retain evidence, and assigning a grade. We include examples of judgements for students in a range of scenarios. This guidance covers making judgements at qualification level for students who are certificating with Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals in summer 2021. We are also providing a separate detailed set of FAQs about teacher assessed grades for your students who are not certificating this summer. We will shortly publish guidance on awarding grades to students taking our other general qualifications and Functional Skills qualifications.

## How to determine your grades for Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals

For your students who are due to complete a Cambridge National or Cambridge Technical qualification in summer 2021, you will make a holistic judgement based on the evidence you have of each student's performance in the subject to determine a teacher assessed grade (TAG) for the qualification. You should assign a TAG using the normal grading scale for the qualification, informed by the grade descriptors and grade exemplar materials. There are no constraints on the minimum number of units or percentage of the qualification which a student must have been taught, as long as the grade is based on evidence of their performance. You should make sure that you have taught as much content as you need to make a judgement about a grade.

The evidence you use:

- can be of different types
- can come from across the course of study.
- can vary between your learners on the same course, depending on what they managed to achieve.

This guidance takes you through the grading decisions step by step and outlines different factors for you to consider. Some of these steps may run at the same time.

## Step 1: What have you taught your students?

Looking at the specification you've been teaching, consider:

- what have you taught?
- has what you have taught been covered deeply or superficially because of the impact of the pandemic? Which topics have you taught in depth and which did you intend to revisit?
- Which topics have you not been able to teach to your students because of the impact of the pandemic?

The evidence used to make your judgement should only include assessment of the knowledge, skills and understanding that has been taught.

## Step 2: What evidence should I collect?

Consider what evidence of student performance you may have collected over the course of study. This evidence can include:

- Student work produced in response to assessment materials we have provided, including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials such as practice or sample papers.
- Banked units (i.e. external exams or moderated assessments that we have graded).
- Internal assessments that have been completed but not OCR moderated, or that have been partially completed.
- Student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflects the specification, follows the same format as our exam board materials and has been marked in a way that reflects our exam board mark schemes. This can include:
  - Homework or classwork where the student practises a task
  - Project work
  - Recordings (e.g. of practical performance).
- Evidence from work experience where relevant to the qualification.
- Tracker of achievement and attainment over the course. This cannot be used in isolation, as by itself it would not support the external quality assurance process/appeal review.
- Witness testimonies or teacher observation records in a form which would normally be submitted for moderation.

## Retention of evidence

You need to retain a copy of the student work you have used as evidence. Where this isn't possible (for example because it was from earlier in the course and evidence was not retained at that point), then a record of the mark can still be used in determining the final grade. If a student decides to appeal their result, copies of the evidence that is available can be considered by OCR. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) has published [guidance on the retention of work](#).

## Extra factors for you to consider when you are collecting evidence

- Private candidates, or students who have moved schools, are likely to have evidence produced with a tutor or other educational provider. You can use any evidence that is available from these sources that you are able to authenticate as the student's own work.
- The evidence you collect must relate to the qualification and specification being assessed.
- You don't need to assess all areas of the specification to arrive at a grade. You should aim to include evidence that assesses the student's ability across a reasonable range of subject content over as much as they have been taught, reflecting, where possible:
  - recall, select and apply knowledge and understanding
  - present information, using terminology
  - apply knowledge, understanding and skills to plan (investigations and/or tasks)
  - review evidence and make judgements (the evidence being reviewed could be based on their own or others work).

Additionally:

- There is no requirement for any units to have been fully taught or assessed
- There are no additional restrictions on the number of pieces of evidence, or number of different types of evidence.
- You should use evidence which demonstrates students' achievements fully, to make sure that their grade represents their performance.
- Part of the evidence of student work that you collect must be in a tangible form that can be reviewed by others, such as written work or audio/visual recordings. This is so that sampling (which is part of the external quality assurance process) and review (which is as part of the potential appeals process) could take place if required in exceptional cases.
- Consider whether the evidence available is sufficient to support your judgement. If not, what additional assessment evidence might be needed? You could use the assessment materials provided by OCR to supplement or help to confirm performance of previous assessments.
- If you provide additional opportunities for individual students to produce evidence, then you should consider whether you should make these assessment opportunities available for the whole cohort.
- You will need to communicate the details of what evidence you use to make your judgement/grading decision to each student so they know what evidence you will use. Informing students about what evidence is going to be used will help them to understand the process.

## Step 3: How can I evaluate the quality of the evidence?

To check the quality of the evidence, you should consider:

- Coverage of knowledge, skills and understanding – What is covered?
- Authenticity – How confident are you that it is the student's own work?
- Level of control – Was it taken in timed conditions? Was there an opportunity for redrafting? Was it supervised?

- Marking – How much support was available to help you in applying the mark scheme? What internal standardisation processes have been applied?
- Were students able to demonstrate their achievements fully, showing the full range of their performance?

There is no ranking of evidence by type. Evidence that you believe is an authentic representation of the student's performance will give you confidence in your overall holistic judgement. In most cases, more recent evidence is likely to be more representative of student performance, although there may be exceptions.

#### **Step 4: Is the range of evidence appropriate for all my students?**

You should normally aim to gather the same range of evidence for all students in a class or cohort. However, the range of evidence that you collect may not be the same for all your students because there may be some variability due to the impact of the pandemic on teaching, learning and assessment. For example, some students may have missed a section of teaching due to illness. If this is the case, you should choose the most appropriate evidence for each student and make sure that your choice does not advantage or disadvantage any students because they have been affected differently by the pandemic.

You can only grade each student on their performance based on the subject content they have been taught. Before finalising your decisions, check that each student has been taught the content for the evidence you plan to use. If there are any differences between a student and the rest of their cohort in what has been taught, this should become apparent before decisions are finalised.

#### **Step 5: How do I assign a grade?**

Grades should be based on a holistic judgement based on a range of appropriate evidence of the student's performance on the knowledge, skills and understanding they have been taught for the qualification. To help you reach a final grade:

- Look at the qualities of the work you have collected and use the sources of support available. This will include your professional experience of the assessment materials used as well as the grade descriptors and exemplification that we have also provided to support your decision making.
- Your grade must be based on your student's performance in the evidence you have collected, and what the student has been taught, not on the student's potential. For example, if all the evidence collected is of Pass and Merit standard, you should not consider awarding that student a Distinction grade. It should be no easier or more difficult for a student to achieve a grade based on their performance than in previous years when exams were taken.
- If a student has 'banked' some units, the grade which they received for those units should not be a cap on the final grade you give them if there is other evidence of stronger achievement. For example, if a unit were taken early in a course of study, a student may have improved their performance during their course. You should include a rationale for how you have used banked evidence.
- It is appropriate to award a U grade if a student does not have evidence of achievement at a Pass grade.
- You must record your decision-making process about the evidence you have included and the grade that you have reached, in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

## Equality and avoiding discrimination

- Your judgements about your students' grades should be objective and avoid unconscious bias. Ofqual has produced some information in relation to awarding qualifications in 2021 here. We will keep you updated with more.
- Grades may then be adjusted as part of the school's or college's quality assurance processes, including internal standardisation arrangements.
- Access arrangements should have been in place when evidence was generated. Where they were not, you should take that into account when coming to your judgement. This could include input from appropriate specialist teachers and other professionals.
- If a student is unable to take an assessment or suffers a traumatic event that might affect their performance, Special Consideration will not apply this summer because students will not be taking their exams. However, where illness or other personal circumstances might have temporarily affected performance, for example in mock exams, you should bear that in mind when making your judgement. You may wish to give a student another opportunity to generate the evidence.

## Guidance for your students who are not certificating in summer 2021

Please note that for students who are not due to complete their Cambridge National or Cambridge Technical qualification in summer 2021, we have provided a separate and detailed set of FAQs about teacher assessed grades (TAGs). For these students you should determine a teacher assessed grade for the units which they were due to take in summer 2021. **These apply to the units where you had planned that students would be working on the assessment by the end of the summer term in 2021. You can still submit a TAG where this is the case, even if you would not have planned to submit those assessments to us for moderation until the next academic year. You will need to make unit entries for these students.**

Overall, the process for determining a unit level TAG for your non-certificating students is very similar to qualification level TAGs:

- Students receiving unit level TAGs should not be advantaged or disadvantaged compared to students who received a qualification level TAG.
- The grade should be based on evidence.
- Your starting point should be evidence which relates directly to that unit. However, if there is evidence of higher achievement from other units, then this may be used towards that unit.

Please see our detailed [FAQs](#).

## Examples of determining teacher assessed grades in a range of scenarios

We've created some examples of determining grades for students in a range of scenarios.

### Worked examples

The following examples illustrate how our guidance might apply to individual students. We've created these six examples to support you making judgements in more complex cases.

They are provided as examples of how a teacher might approach grading the performance of a particular student. Where marks are included, it's to illustrate the process in theory and should not be taken as an indication of any notional mark needed for a grade. There is no indication of how demanding an assessment is, so you can't generalise the marks and grades to other assessments.

The following table shows what each example illustrates:

	Accounting for contextual factors in evidence	Considering individual disruption to learning	Marks available but no work	Partially completed internal assessment	Little evidence available	Unit level TAG for non-certificating learner
Student 1	X	X				
Student 2	X	X	X			
Student 3	X			X		
Student 4	X		X			
Student 5	X				X	
Student 6	X					X

### Student 1

An example of accounting for contextual factors in evidence and considering individual disruption to learning.

**Stage 1:** The teacher considers what has been taught and what evidence is available across the whole class.

**Stage 2:** The teacher selects the evidence that best shows the student's performance on a broad range of content. As well as assessments taken in controlled conditions, this includes a classroom assessment and a homework task, as these assess skills not assessed elsewhere. For Student 1, the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark	Comments
Banked external assessment (Jan 20)	Merit	
Internal assessment (Dec 20)	Distinction	
Homework task (Jan 21)	19/25	
Classroom assessment 1 (May 21)	32/45	Replaced with additional task; new mark = 39/45
Classroom assessment 2 (May 21)	37/45	

**Stage 3:** When evaluating the evidence, the teacher pays particular attention to the student's performance in the external assessment and in assessments where they are confident that the student has not received any support. The external assessment was an externally assessed unit so they can have confidence in the grade awarded, although it is not as recent a piece of evidence as others. Because the classroom assessments are recent, they are a strong indicator of the student's current performance.

**Stage 4:** The teacher notes that for Student 1, the classroom assessment 1, taken in May 21, includes a section on a topic that they missed for valid reasons. The teacher decides to discount that piece of evidence for Student 1 and sets them an additional piece of work, which the teacher marks. The teacher has a conversation with the student to inform them about the evidence which will be used.

**Stage 5:** The teacher uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support their judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, they award Student 1 a grade Distinction. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

## Student 2

An example of accounting for contextual factors in evidence and considering individual disruption to learning, where marks are available but no work.

**Stage 1:** The teacher considers what has been taught and what evidence is available across the whole class.

**Stage 2:** The teacher selects the evidence that best shows the student's performance across the specification. For Student 2, the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark	Comments
Classroom assessment (Oct 20)	17/30	
Mock exam (Nov 20)	Merit	
Internal assessment (not externally moderated) (April 21)	Pass	Discount this piece
Topic test (March 21)	42/70	
Classroom assessment (May 21)		

The teacher doesn't have the physical evidence for the classroom assessment or the mock exam but they have a record of the student's marks alongside those of the rest of the class.

**Stage 3:** When evaluating the evidence, the teacher is confident that all pieces of evidence are authentically the student's work. They note that several of the pieces of evidence have published grade boundaries, so they use those to assign grades to those pieces.

**Stage 4:** The teacher knows that although the class was taught all the content in the assessments, Student 2 has missed some teaching due to valid reasons. There are sections of the content assessed in the internal assessment that the class took in April 2021 that the student was not taught. They remove that piece of evidence for Student 2. The teacher sets the student an additional piece of work, which the teacher marks. The teacher has a conversation with the student to inform them about the evidence which will be used.

**Stage 5:** The teacher uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support their judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, they award Student 2 a Merit. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.



### Student 3

An example of accounting for contextual factors in evidence, with partially completed internal assessment.

**Stage 1:** The teacher considers what has been taught and what evidence is available across the whole class.

**Stage 2:** The teacher selects evidence that best exemplifies the student's performance in the different aspects of the specification.

As this is a performance-based subject, they include the marks the student achieved in classroom assessments, averaged to a grade. The internal assessment is partially completed for valid reasons, but the teacher uses the mark scheme and previous grade boundaries to estimate a notional grade for each student. They also include a written homework task as an additional example of the skills normally assessed in the final exam. For Student 3, the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark	Comments
Internal assessment (Nov 2020)	Pass	
Written homework task (Feb 2020)	21/40	
Classroom performance marks (Sept – Dec 2020)	Merit	Grade average across tasks
Partially completed internal assessment (March 2021)	Merit	
Topic test (April 2021)	37/60	

**Stage 3:** When evaluating the evidence, the teacher doesn't know if the student had support with the homework task, but bears that in mind. They are confident that all the other work by Student 3 is authentic. They consider that recent evidence is likely to be more representative of the student's performance than internal assessment from autumn 2020. As internal assessment is heavily weighted in this subject, the teacher places greater emphasis on the more recent, partially completed internal assessment and on the classroom assessments, which assessed the same skills as the internal assessment which was completed in November 2020.

**Stage 4:** The teacher is confident that Student 3 has been taught all the content assessed in the tasks included. The teacher has a conversation with the student to inform them about the evidence which will be used.

**Stage 5:** The teacher uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support their judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, they award Student 3 a grade Merit. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

## Student 4

An example of accounting for contextual factors in evidence with marks available but no work.

**Stage 1:** The teacher considers what has been taught and what evidence is available.

**Stage 2:** The teacher selects evidence that best shows the student's performance in the different aspects of the specification. For Student 4, the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark
Partially completed internal assessment (Sept 20)	6/15
Classwork (Oct 20)	9/30
Completed internal assessment (Nov 20)	Merit
Classwork (Dec 20)	5/20

**Stage 3:** The teacher is confident that Student 3 didn't have any additional support with the tasks completed so weights them all equally. The internal assessment was externally moderated, so they use the grade awarded.

**Stage 4:** The teacher is confident that the student was taught all the content assessed in the tasks included. The teacher has a conversation with the student to inform them about the evidence which will be used.

**Stage 5:** The teacher uses the evidence gathered from the rest of the class to support their judgement for Student 4. They compare the marks recorded for the same tasks for other students with the grades they gave them based on the evidence collected. On this basis, they award Student 4 a Merit. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

## Student 5

An example of accounting for contextual factors in evidence, with little evidence available.

**Stage 1:** The teacher considers what has been taught and what evidence is available.

**Stage 2:** This centre offers alternative provision. Student 5 has recently transferred from a different school, so the teacher is not sure what the student has been taught. The teacher has been unable to collect any evidence from the student's previous centre; they only have the evidence from the two assessments that the teacher has been able to carry out. For Student 5, the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark
Past paper (April 21)	Pass
Partially completed internal assessment (May 21)	7/50

**Stage 3:** The assessments were taken in controlled conditions, so the teacher is content that there was a high level of control and that it was the student's own work. The past paper was a complete past paper with published grade boundaries, so the teacher feels secure in the judgement of the grade assigned to it.

**Stage 4:** The teacher has a conversation with Student 5. The student is uncertain about what has been taught but the teacher makes them aware of what evidence will be used.

**Stage 5:** Taking the above factors into consideration and cross checking the quality of the work with the grade descriptors and exemplification provided, the teacher awards Student 5 a grade Pass. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

## Student 6

An example of a non-certificating student.

This student is not due to complete their qualification in summer 2021 but would have completed the assessment for a unit. They are eligible for a unit level TAG.

**Stage 1:** The teacher considers what has been taught for the unit in question (an internally assessed unit), as well as the whole qualification, and what evidence is available.

**Stage 2:** The unit was due to be taught while schools were closed. Students were unable to access specialist software which would have allowed them to achieve the highest marks, but did have access to alternative, more limited software, which allowed them to complete some work towards the unit. The student has evidence from other units in the qualification which the teacher uses.

Evidence	Grade/Mark
Internal assessment (not externally moderated) for the relevant unit (February 2021).	Merit
Partially completed internal assessment for a different unit (April 2021)	Distinction
Past paper for an externally assessed unit (March 2021)	Distinction

**Stage 3:** The assessments were taken in controlled conditions so the teacher is content that there was a high level of control and that it was the student's own work.

**Stage 4:** The teacher has a conversation with the student to inform them about the evidence which will be used.

**Stage 5:** Taking the above factors into consideration and cross checking the quality of the work with the grade descriptors and exemplification provided, the teacher awards Student 6 a Distinction. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.