

OCR Guidance on the determination of unit-level grades for units of Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals for autumn 2021

Processes to be adopted by centres and support available from OCR

This document brings together three documents issued in April 2021 that covered the processes to be adopted by centres for qualification grades in summer 2021 and unit grades in autumn 2021.

The guidance has been amended to reflect the following:

Guidance refers only to unit grades.

There are no changes to the guidance on **how to** determine grades as the guidance for qualification grades is relevant to unit grades.

We have added more examples of determining teacher assessed grades for units.

There is a restriction on what work can be used. Only **work** produced up to 31 August 2021 can be used to support a judgement on a grade.

There are minimal changes to the **processes** on determining grades:

- centre policies produced for your summer 2021 qualification grades must be reviewed to ensure they are appropriate for unit grades
- you do not need to submit your centre policy unless we want to sample your students' work
- you do not need a centre policy summary for unit grades
- you do not need to submit a record of why outcomes might be different from historical outcomes

The approach to external quality assurance is very similar.

We have added dates and a timeline for submitting and quality assuring (sampling) unit grades.

We permit you to share the unit grade(s) with the student once you have submitted them to us. You must make it clear to the student the grade is subject to external quality assurance.

OCR Guidance on the determination of unit grades for Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals for autumn 2021: processes to be adopted by centres and support available from OCR

Introduction

In February 2021, the Department for Education (the DfE) and Ofqual confirmed that your students taking our Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals should receive grades based on teacher judgements for assessments due to be taken in the academic year 2020/21. This applies to students who were due to certificate in summer 2021 as well as students who will certificate in future years so that they can receive a teacher assessed grade (TAG) for unit assessments they intended to take in 2020/21.

These arrangements apply to the units where you had planned that students would be working on the assessment up to the end of the summer term in 2021. You can submit unit TAGs 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 need to have made unit entries for these students.

The process for awarding grades for units based on teacher assessed judgements is very similar to the process for qualification-level grades for Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals in summer 2021.

- 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 as well.

Please see our detailed [FAQs](#).

The DfE has confirmed that a student who has received a CAG or a TAG in either 2019 to 2020 or 2020 to 2021 will be able to carry this result forward to be used when they certificate.

[See analysis of decisions on consultation for VTQs in 2021/22](#)

We have utilised some of the guidance and templates issued by JCQ for grades for GCSEs and A levels in summer 2021. Where this is the case, the guidance links to the appropriate section of the JCQ Guidance on Determination of grades for A/AS levels and GCSEs for summer 2021. Where there is a difference we have provided detailed guidance in this document.

In developing this guidance, we have

- taken into consideration the needs of centres and teachers;
- ensured compliance with DfE directions and Ofqual requirements; and
- tried to minimise administrative burden for centres.

This guidance provides information in respect of the process, from the creation and submission of a Centre Policy, through the determination of grades, requirements for internal quality assurance procedures, submission of teacher assessed grades, the external quality assurance process, the issue of results and the appeals process for students.

If necessary, and dependent upon questions raised by centres, we will update this document. We will make sure these updates are clearly marked and widely communicated. This will be to clarify guidance if required, rather than change the guidance itself.

Some of this content outlined requires actions. There is also supporting advice, information and templates to make the submission of a Centre Policy straightforward. While some forms and templates in this guidance and the JCQ guidance that this document links to are optional, if not used, a similar approach to record keeping is required. We fully recognise the challenge of allocating grades to students this year and we hope this guidance, supporting templates and proformas, will ease the administrative burden and ensure students, their parents, and all those who use the grades awarded can have confidence that they have been determined as fairly and objectively as possible.

Scope of guidance

The scope of this guidance applies to all exam centres in England offering the following qualifications regulated by Ofqual:

- Cambridge Nationals
- Cambridge Technicals 2012 suite
- Cambridge Technicals 2016 Suite

This guidance also applies to centres in Wales and Northern Ireland who deliver Cambridge Nationals and Technicals.

Other essential documentation

While this guidance lays out the processes, information and support available to centres from OCR, it is important to also read and comply with relevant Ofqual regulations including:

- Guidance: Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021, Ofqual, 24 March 2021

Ofqual and Department for Education (England) Publications

This guidance was informed by a number of additional publications from the Department for Education and Ofqual. These are listed below for reference:

- Direction from the Secretary of State for Education to Ofqual's Chief Regulator, Department for Education, 25 February 2021
- Vocational and Technical qualifications contingency regulatory framework, Ofqual, 24 March 2021

Centres should consider the following additional guidance from Ofqual during the awarding of grades by teachers in 2021. This guidance is based on directions from the Secretary of State for Education to the Chief Regulator of Ofqual.

- Guidance: Information for centres about making objective judgements in relation to awarding qualifications in 2021, Ofqual March 2021 (Ofqual/21/6768/5)

Terminology

For clarity, the terminology used in this guidance document has been standardised. It is the same terminology as used in the JCQ Guidance on Determination of grades for A/AS levels and GCSEs for summer 2021.

- *Awarding organisations*: this encompasses, 'exam boards' and 'awarding bodies'
- *Assessment materials*: qualification-specific sets of questions covering key knowledge, understanding and skills, provided with mark schemes and mapping grids.

- *Centres*: these are exam centres approved in the National Centre Number register (NCNR).
- *Centre policy*: the policy sets out the processes centres will follow for determining grades, in an appropriate, consistent and fair way – you must review your centre policy and revise it where necessary so it is appropriate for unit-level TAGs.
- *Private candidates*: are students who have not studied with the exam centre that makes their entry.
- *SENCOs*: (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) this encompasses SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) leads in colleges and other relevant experts and assessors.
- *Students*: this means students entered for qualifications in 2021 within the scope of this guidance as outlined above and encompasses 'candidates' and 'students'.
- *Support materials*: to assist in the determination and submission of grades, for example guidance, training, exemplar responses, performance data and grade descriptors.

What will OCR do?

We have provided centres with a package of support materials to assist in the determination and submission of grades, provide contacts and answer queries. This included questions, mark schemes, exemplar materials and grade descriptors.

Cambridge Nationals and Technicals will be covered by the centre policies to be produced by centres for General Qualifications. You do not need to complete a separate centre policy for Cambridge Nationals and Technicals unit TAGs if you took part in the summer 2021 teacher assessed grade process and so have already completed a centre policy. You do, however, need to review the policy to make sure it is appropriate for the unit TAG process. Please see the section on [centre policy guidance](#) below for more information.

After the submission of grades, we will conduct a quality assurance exercise that will have elements of both targeted and random sampling of evidence and rationale for TAGs awarded for some candidates at some centres. Further information can be found in the quality assurance process (see section [the quality assurance process](#) below).

We may have further contact with our centres if, following any sampled quality assurance activity, we have concerns in relation to the teacher assessed grades submitted.

We are responsible for determining final grades and awarding qualifications. We will also manage the second stage of appeals. See [JCQ Guidance on Determination of grades for A/AS levels and GCSEs for summer 2021, Appeals](#).

What will centres do?

Centres will create and submit a centre policy. **If the centre did not take part in the summer 2021 teacher assessed grade process and so did not complete a centre policy** – a pre-populated template option is available ([see JCQ Guidance on Determination of grades for A/AS levels and GCSEs for summer 2021, Additional Templates and Support Materials](#)).

This will:

- outline the roles and responsibilities of individuals in the centre;
- detail what training and support will be provided to centre staff involved with the process, including any training around bias and objectivity in assessment and grading decisions;

- confirm the approach to be taken when determining teacher assessed grades, including consideration of evidence and how that evidence informs students' grades;
- detail the internal quality assurance processes that are in place;
- detail any provision for private candidates, if applicable.

Centres will collaborate with OCR if any concerns are raised following the submission of a centre policy. This may include participating in a virtual visit.

Centres will review grades determined by teachers in line with the centre policy.

Centres should ensure that students are aware of the evidence used to determine their grade and appropriately take into account any representations they make in relation to it.

Centres must submit teacher assessed grades with a Head of Centre Declaration that confirms that the centre complied with its centre policy. We will provide a declaration form and guidance on how to submit them along with information on grade submission. We have updated the Head of Centre Declaration to include a statement on reviewing the policy and updating it where necessary. Please see the section on [centre policy guidance](#) below for more information.

Centres will collaborate with us where external quality assurance sampling is required, which will include participating in a virtual visit.

You can share the grades for unit(s) with the student once you have submitted them to us. You must explain to students that the grades may change as part of the external quality assurance process and the grade will only be confirmed on results day, which is 13 January 2022.

Centres will on request conduct the first stage of the appeals process, to check if an administrative or procedural error has occurred. Centres will also be required to submit second stage appeals to us on a student's behalf, if the student continues to believe that an error persists or the grade awarded was an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement. [See JCQ Guidance on Determination of grades for A/AS levels and GCSEs for summer 2021, Appeals.](#)

Timelines and key dates for unit-level TAG submission and external quality assurance in autumn 2021

The overall process is illustrated on the next page. The key dates to be aware of are:

27 September to 8 October: Window to submit unit teacher assessed grades via OCR's Grade Submission System

11 October to 22 October: Centres receive notification of evidence required to support teacher assessed grades

14 October to 28 October: OCR conducts sample checks of evidence

13 January 2022: Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals (Level 2 and Level 3) results

13 January 2022: Appeals window opens

1 March 2022: Appeals window closes

Where to get awarding organisation information support and guidance

Information on on arrangements for Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals students who are not certificating in summer 2021 is [here](#).

The quality assurance process

Cambridge Nationals and Technicals must be covered in a centre policy ([see JCQ Guidance on Centre Policy Guidance](#)).

Internal quality assurance arrangements at your centre should follow the approach outlined in the [JCQ Guidance on The Quality Assurance Process](#).

After teacher assessed grades have been submitted, we will conduct a stage of quality assurance in the form of sampling of the evidence for some teacher assessed grades for some students and centres.

External quality assurance – sampling of candidate evidence after centres have submitted TAGs

After your centre has submitted the teacher assessed grades for your students, we will conduct some further quality assurance in the form of sampling of evidence for some students from some centres and reviewing the centre policy. This will allow us to check that centres have implemented the approach that they outlined in their submitted centre policies. This stage of checking will also allow us to take a closer look at a sample of candidate evidence, the rationale for grades and your centre policy.

The sampling process will take place following the submission of grades by centres. Targeted sampling will be informed by:

- identification of any substantial divergence in the overall results profile for your cohort compared to the profiles for cohorts from previous years; and
- centres where additional support may be required.

In addition, some random sampling will take place.

When we collect the sample, we will review the evidence and grading rationale for an initial sample of students from a qualification. We will tell you which students' grades and evidence will be reviewed for a qualification. Subject expert reviewers will carry out the review.

If we are going to sample evidence from your centre, we will ask to see the evidence and record of decision making for a sample of five students from the cohort, from the top, middle, and bottom of the range of grades awarded. This will allow us to check evidence from across the grade range. We will also ask to see your centre policy.

We will let you know shortly after 14 October if we will be asking you to submit evidence for sampling. If we will be sampling your cohort, we will also tell you which candidates' evidence to submit and for which units. We will ask you to submit the evidence within a week of receiving the request. We will be providing further information soon about how to submit the evidence and will also tell you what you need to do if you experience any difficulties with this.

Review of the sample

Our trained, subject expert reviewers will then review the evidence you submit to us. They will check that the sample is as requested and as described in the centre policy. They will also review the evidence and records to check that they support the teacher assessed grades that have been submitted. In most cases, we will then contact you to say that we don't need to see anything further. If our subject expert reviewers do have any concerns or feel that they need to see more evidence, then we will let you know that we need to undertake a further review. Where this is necessary, we will contact you to arrange a professional conversation between you and our subject specialist so that they can ask about the approach and rationale for the teacher assessed grades and can work with you to resolve any remaining issues.

In very rare cases, where it is not possible to resolve issues arising, we may need to withhold results pending further investigation.

There is more detailed information on what happens if you are selected for sampling on pages 20 to 21.

Centre policy guidance

See JCQ Guidance on Determination of grades for A/AS levels and GCSEs for summer 2021, *Centre Policy Guidance*.

As part of the teacher assessed grade process for summer 2021, all centres were required to create a centre policy setting out the processes to be followed for determining grades in an appropriate, consistent and fair way.

Please review your JCQ centre policy from summer 2021 to check the information is still relevant and update it where necessary. You do not need to review or revise your centre policy summary. (We have updated the Head of Centre declaration to include a statement on reviewing the policy and updating it where necessary.)

If you did not take part in the summer 2021 teacher assessed grade process and so did not complete a centre policy, we'll be in contact with you.

You do not submit/resubmit your centre policy unless you are chosen for sampling. At that point we will ask you to submit your policy to us as part of your quality assurance sample.

If you have any queries about your centre policy, please contact us at: JCQQA@ocr.org.uk

Guidance on grading

This section explains how to make your judgements that form the basis for unit 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 later on in the document.

Determining your grades for Cambridge Technical and Cambridge Nationals

For your students who are not due to complete a Cambridge National or Cambridge Technical qualification in summer 2021, you will make a holistic judgement, for each unit, based on the evidence you have of each student's performance in the subject to determine a teacher assessed grade (TAG) for the unit. 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 up to 31 August 2021. **You cannot use work produced after 31 August 2021.** 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](#).

You must retain the evidence which is used to support a Teacher Assessed Grade until 6 months after the date of the issue of the result, or the conclusion of any appeal in relation to that result, whichever is later.

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 then you may not be able to submit a unit grade as you cannot use work produced after 31 August 2021. You can either submit a U grade or not submit a teacher assessed grade.
- 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?

For each unit, 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, focusing on the units in question. It may be appropriate to award different grades to different units for the same student. To help you reach a final unit 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 unit grade you give them if there is other evidence of stronger achievement. For example, if the same unit or a different 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.

Sharing the grade with students

You can share the grade for the unit(s) with the student once you have submitted them to us. This is different to the arrangements for qualification grades for summer 2021 because it may be helpful for students to understand their progress early in the academic year.

You must explain to the student that the grades may change as part of the external quality assurance process and the grade will only be confirmed on results day, which is 13 January 2022.

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 was unable to take an assessment or suffered a traumatic event that might have affected their performance, special consideration will not apply this summer because students did not take 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.

We have provided [worked examples](#) to assist teachers in making grading decisions: these provide a number of scenarios to assist teachers to arrive at a fair grade.

Using grade descriptors and grading exemplars

This section explains how to use grade descriptors when you are making student performance judgements.

You should use the grade descriptors with the grading exemplars. We have produced grading exemplars for each specification within the additional assessment materials area of the [Grade Submission System](#).

You should use the descriptors and exemplification to make **holistic** judgements about student performance.

Where to get further support

Any teacher may also contact us directly for further help. Our Customer Support Centre is here to support you on 01223 553998 or support@ocr.org.uk

The grade descriptors

Grade descriptors are general statements that give a high-level reflection of student performance characteristics.

We have created exemplars for each specification. The exemplars use student work to illustrate the grade descriptors, and provide an explanation of how the work meets the grade descriptors.

The descriptors will help you place student performance relative to the performance standards set. The performance standards are the same as summer 2021 and previous years where an examination series took place. You should also use these grade descriptors and exemplars for unit level TAGs for non-certificating students. You can share unit grades with the student. Please see section above [sharing grades with students](#).

What grade descriptors exist?

Grade descriptors have been created for Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals. They describe **mid-grade performance**.

Cambridge Nationals: there are grade descriptors for D2, P2, D1, P1.

Cambridge Technicals: there are grade descriptors for Distinction, Merit and Pass.

Using the descriptors

Grade descriptors will help you to identify:

- The performance characteristics within a piece of evidence
- A potential grade band for a collection of evidence

You should be familiar with the evidence from your students before using grade descriptors.

You should use the **grade descriptor and grading exemplars** to support decision making.

The process

These grade descriptors do not highlight performance characteristics for all grades. You are free to award teacher assessed grades from the whole range of grades available. For example, if a student's performance is stronger than the grade descriptors for a Pass grade but do not fully meet the grade descriptors for a Distinction, then you should consider awarding a Merit.

Review your evidence. Read through the grade descriptors. Match the evidence to the suitable statements within the grade descriptors.

You may find that evidence covers more than one grade descriptor. You should make a **holistic** grade judgement for each unit. It may be appropriate to have different grades for different unit for the same student which may be a 'best fit' approach.

For example, if you have evidence for a student that contains:

- Many characteristics of a Merit response
- A few characteristics of a Pass response
- A single characteristic of a Distinction response.

Choosing either a Merit or a Pass will be most suitable for this set of evidence. As there are more Merit characteristics, settling on a Merit is likely to be the most appropriate.

Remember that grades should be based on a holistic judgement. You should judge grades based on the subject content which your students have been taught.

Your final decisions will rely on your professional judgement and experience.

Guidance on the use of additional assessment materials

Introduction

Only evidence that has been produced up to 31 August 2021 can be used to support a unit grade. If you used the additional assessment materials to produce work before 31 August please follow the guidance below.

If you used the additional assessment materials you may decide how much to rely on these materials to inform your decision making. They were intended for use to plug gaps in demonstrated knowledge or to validate a previous assessment.

Understanding the outcomes

Once you've marked your students' work, if you have reason to believe an outcome doesn't reflect a student's usual level of performance – for example because of the conditions the student completed the work in – you don't have to include the outcome in your range of evidence. You could use other evidence. You should refer to the overarching grading guidance to help you decide whether you have sufficient evidence to award a grade reliably.

These materials are not exams and did not need to be completed under exam conditions. If you used the additional materials you should consider your students' results in the light of the conditions in which the activity was completed. If you set an activity to be completed under your supervision, you know how long a student has spent on the task, what materials have helped them and whether they have received any additional support.

You should also consider if the student had access to normal access arrangements when they took the activity, especially if you set it to be taken under timed, test conditions.

The assessment materials are groups of questions focused on discrete areas of a specification and may vary in breadth and demand depending on the topic. Therefore, unlike full past papers, there are no grade boundaries available. There is no requirement for you to turn the mark from an assessment into a grade and the mark should be considered alongside other pieces of evidence. You should consider what gap in the range of evidence you are filling by using this material. For example, you could refer to the grade descriptors for your subject and target a particular aspect of the grade descriptor to assure yourself of the appropriateness of your grading decision for your students. This would be particularly relevant if you have taught an area of the specification referenced in the descriptor, but you do not yet have evidence of the students' learning in this area.

Reasonable adjustments, access arrangements and special considerations

See JCQ Guidance on Determination of grades for A/AS levels and GCSEs for summer 2021, *Reasonable adjustments, access arrangements and special considerations*.

Submission of grades

Students who are not certifying in summer 2021

We will provide further information about the process for doing this soon. [Our FAQs on the arrangements for Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals students not certifying in summer 2021 are here.](#)

Guidance for exam centres accepting private candidates

See JCQ Guidance on Determination of grades for A/AS levels and GCSEs for summer 2021, *Guidance for Exam Centre Accepting Private Candidates*.

Malpractice

See [JCQ Guidance on Determination of grades for A/AS levels and GCSEs for summer 2021, Malpractice](#).

Results

Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals (L3 and L2)

- Results will be released to centres on Thursday 13 January 2022.
- Students will receive their results on Thursday 13 January 2022.

Appeals

See [JCQ Guidance on Determination of grades for A/AS levels and GCSEs for summer 2021, Appeals](#).

Additional templates and support materials

A range of materials and templates are also being made available to assist centres and will be downloadable from the JCQ website at: [Summer 2021 arrangements – JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#). The following of these documents are relevant for Cambridge Nationals and Technicals:

- Centre policy for awarding teacher assessed grades: whilst using this template is not compulsory, it is highly recommended as otherwise centres will need to prepare their own complete Centre Policy, which is a requirement.
- Head of Centre declaration (this is required, this must be submitted by all centres as part of quality assurance).
- Head of Department checklist/declaration (this is optional but if this template is not used then the same information must still be recorded).

We have [provided worked examples](#) to assist teachers in making grading decisions: these provide a number of scenarios to assist teachers to arrive at a fair grade.

A list of the information that should be included in the [record of decision making](#) is provided.

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	Moderated/banked units
Student 1	X					X	
Student 2	X			X		X	
Student 3	X			X		X	X
Student 4	X	X	X			X	
Student 5	X	X			X	X	

Student 1

An example of a non-certificating student. (This example was included in the guidance published in April to support the summer 2021 TAG process.).

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 1 a Distinction. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

Student 2 (Cambridge National)

This student is eligible for a unit level TAG for an externally assessed unit and one internally assessed unit as they intended to be assessed on them both by 31 August 2021. The teacher needs to follow steps 1 to 5 for each unit separately.

Step 1 for the internally assessed unit: The teacher considers what has been taught for the internally assessed unit, as well as the whole qualification, and what evidence is available.

Step 2: The unit was taught to students in full, though candidates were unable to fully complete the whole assessment. The student has evidence from another unit in the qualification which the teacher uses. For student 2 the evidence for the internally assessed unit is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark
1. For the relevant internally assessed unit (between April and May 2021):	
1a) LO1 internal assessment (not externally moderated)	8/12
1b) LO2 internal assessment (not externally moderated)	16/18
1c) LO3 partially completed internal assessment (not externally moderated)	3/10
1d) LO4 classroom activity	20/20
2. Classroom activity for one learning outcome for a second internally assessed unit	8/12

Step 3: Assessments 1a), 1b) and 1c) 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 classroom activities for 1d) and 2 were not taken in controlled conditions and students were able to discuss responses before completing the task.

Step 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.

Step 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 Distinction at L2 for the internally assessed unit. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

The teacher then follows the same process for the externally assessed unit.

Step 1 for the externally assessed unit: The teacher considers what has been taught for the unit, as well as the whole qualification, and what evidence is available.

Step 2: The unit was taught to students in full and some students were able to complete a past paper.

For student 2 the evidence for the externally assessed unit is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark
Topic test for the relevant unit (May 2021)	18/30
Past paper for the relevant unit (June 2021)	48/60

Step 3: The topic test and the past paper were taken in controlled conditions so the teacher is content that it was the student's own work. They note that the past paper has published grade boundaries, so they use those to assign a grade to the evidence.

Step 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.

Step 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 Distinction at L2 for the externally assessed unit. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

Student 3 (Cambridge Technicals, relevant to Level 2 and Level 3)

An example of accounting for contextual factors in evidence with marking available for one internally assessed unit but the work is incomplete.

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

Step 2: The teacher selects evidence that is most representative of the student's performance.

For student 3, the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark
Classwork for the relevant internally assessed unit (March 21)	Pass
Classwork for the relevant internally assessed unit (February 21)	Pass
Partially completed internal assessment, 2 out of 3 tasks, for the relevant unit (May 2021)	Merit
Completed/banked external assessment (Jan 21)	Merit

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

Step 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.

Step 5: They award Student 3 a Merit. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

Student 4 (Cambridge Technicals)

An example of accounting for contextual factors in evidence and considering individual disruption to learning, where marks are available but the work is not available.

Step 1: The teacher considers what has been taught. They are submitting a TAG for one externally assessed unit that was to be assessed in June 2021.

Step 2: The teacher selects the evidence that best shows the student's performance across the specification. For student 4, the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark
Topic Test for the relevant unit (May 2021)	42/70
Classroom assessment for the relevant unit (May 2021)	17/30
Classroom assessment for the relevant unit (June 2021)	9/30 (discount this piece)
Additional classroom assessment for the relevant unit (July 2021)	8/15
Mock exam for a different unit (Jul 2021)	Merit

The teacher doesn't have the physical evidence for the classroom assessment completed in May 2021 or the mock exam but they have a record of the student's marks alongside those of the rest of the class.

Step 3: When evaluating the available evidence, the teacher is confident that they are the student's work. Though physical evidence is unavailable for two pieces of work, the remaining pieces provide confidence that the marks are reflective of the student's performance. The mock exam is for a unit that will be assessed in 2021/22 so the work is being used as an indicator of the student's performance. They note that the mock exam has published grade boundaries, so they use those to assign grades to that piece of work.

Step 4: The teacher knows that although the class was taught all the content in the assessments, Student 4 has missed some teaching due to valid reasons. There are sections of the content assessed in the examined unit that the class took in June 2021 that the student was not taught. They remove that piece of evidence for Student 4. The teacher sets the student an additional piece of work, which is completed in July 2021 and the teacher marks. The teacher has a conversation with the student to inform them about the evidence which will be used.

Step 5: The teacher uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support their judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, they award Student 4 a Merit. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

Student 5 (Cambridge Technicals)

An example of accounting for contextual factors in evidence for one internally assessed unit, with little evidence available.

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

Step 2: Student 5 transferred from a different school after Easter. The teacher has been unable to collect any evidence from the student's previous centre and is not sure what the student had been taught; 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
Classwork (May 2021)	Merit
Partially completed internal assessment, 3 out of 4 learning outcomes (July 2021)	Pass

Step 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 classwork was a knowledge checking activity and covered only about a quarter of the unit. The activity was completed in exam conditions, so the teacher feels secure in the judgement of the grade assigned to it. As the partially completed internal assessment covered nearly all of the unit the teacher feels this is a better representation of the standard of the student's performance.

Step 4: The teacher has a conversation with student 5. The student is uncertain about what they had been taught at the previous school but the teacher makes them aware of what evidence will be used.

Step 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 Pass. They record their decision-making process in accordance with the school's quality assurance processes.

External quality assurance (post grade submission – sampling)

After you submit your teacher assessed grades, there will be a process of external quality assurance. We will sample candidate evidence and rationales for grading to make sure that the grades being given are reasonable based on the evidence of attainment.

How will we select centres for checks?

All dates are the same for NI, Wales and England.

After 8 October we will select centres for the external quality assurance checks.

For more information on how we will select centres please see section above on External quality assurance – sampling of candidate evidence after centres have submitted TAGs.

When will you know if you have been selected?

We will tell you by the 22 October if your centre has been selected for the quality assurance checks for Cambridge Nationals and/or Cambridge Technicals.

We will confirm by 25 October if your centre has not been selected for external quality assurance checks for Cambridge Nationals or Technicals. Where your centre has not been selected, you must still retain candidate evidence and records until 6 months after the date of issue of the result, or the conclusion of any appeal in relation to that result, whichever is later.

What will you need to submit?

We will ask you to submit evidence and records on grading determination for five candidates, for specified subjects, qualifications and units. Normally we will only ask for evidence for one unit for each of the five candidates. It is possible that all units within a subject may be sampled. No unit will be prioritised over another.

You will need to submit the evidence used to support the grade for these five candidates, including:

- candidate work,
- the record of grading decisions for these candidates.

How should you submit your sample?

We will ask you to submit work electronically, via OCR's secure site Interchange. Where evidence or records are in hard copy, you will need to scan these to upload them.

You will need to upload the work to Interchange by 3 November at the latest.

We will not be able to guarantee that grades can be processed by results day if you do not submit your sample on time. If you are having difficulty submitting samples, please contact us on 01223 553998.

We will provide further details about how to submit your sample before we send the sample request.

Review of the sample

Trained, subject expert reviewers will review the evidence you submit to us. They will check that the sample is as requested and will also check the record of why outcomes might be different from historical outcomes where relevant. They will also review the evidence and records to check that they support the teacher assessed grades that have been submitted.

What will happen next

The reviewer may contact you to set up a follow up phone-call where they have additional questions about your sample.

If the reviewer has no further questions having reviewed the sample they will contact you to confirm we do not need any more information.

Our intention is that all centres will have been contacted by the 17 November, either to arrange for a follow up call, or to confirm that there is no further action to take. We cannot guarantee to meet this date where the deadline for the submission of evidence has not been met.

Where there is no further action to take, you will still need to retain candidate evidence and records in case of an appeal.

What will happen if the reviewer asks for a follow-up call

Follow up calls will be needed where the reviewer needs more information to understand how you have determined your grades. The call will be a supportive, professional conversation between the reviewer and the relevant staff at your centre, giving an opportunity for the reviewer to ask about any areas of concern or misunderstanding, and for you to explain your approach and rationale to grading in more detail.

Follow up calls will take place during the quality assurance window, through to 26 November.

The outcome of the follow up call may be that the reviewer has no remaining concerns, in which case they will confirm this to the centre and make a record of their decision. There will be no further action for these centres to take, though they will need to retain candidate evidence and records.

If after the call the reviewer still has concerns, these will be escalated within OCR so that the centre and OCR can agree an approach that will allow appropriate grades to be issued to candidates on results day.

Failure to engage with the quality assurance process may jeopardise the timely issue of results to students and may constitute malpractice.

Timeline for sampling

See [timeline](#) for unit-level TAG submission and external quality assurance in autumn 2021.