



## Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

### Education and Inclusion Service Directorate

#### CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS/CARERS ON THE EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR LEARNERS 2020 VERSION 2 (28.08.20)

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This guidance is intended to support parents and carers in understanding the GCSE, AS and A Level examination procedures and is informed by

<https://qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/>

#### **QUESTIONS**

##### **GCSEs, AS and A LEVELS:**

###### **1. What is happening with summer examinations this year?**

Welsh Government announced that schools would be closed after 20 March and therefore the summer exams could not take place. Learners due to sit their GCSEs, AS and A Levels this summer will be awarded a fair grade to recognise their work.

###### **2. How will the decision to cancel summer examinations impact me?**

The priority is ensuring fairness for learners while following public health advice. Grades for GCSEs AS and A Levels in 2020 will be calculated using a range of evidence, including teacher-assessed grades and performance in other external assessments. The focus is on what is in the best interests of learners both in terms of their current well-being and their progression on to education, training or employment.

###### **3. Will we have to sit the exams in the autumn?**

It is not the intention for learners in Wales to sit their GCSEs in the autumn, at present. Learners will be awarded a fair grade to recognise their work. The exams that usually take place in November (GCSEs in English language, Mathematics, Mathematics-Numeracy and Welsh language) may happen as normal.

###### **4. What will happen about practical exams?**

Since schools have been closed to most learners, it has not been possible for practical work to be completed. Practical work completed previously by learners has been part of the assessment information that teachers have considered in producing their teacher assessment grade for each learner.



## **5. How will grades be calculated?**

Grades for GCSEs, AS and A Levels in 2020 have been calculated using a range of evidence. They are based on a combination of factors, which included marks for work completed to date (such as exam units sat in 2019) and teacher/centre assessment grades. Teacher/centre assessment grades have been based on what teachers would expect a learner to achieve at the end of the course if they had sat the exams. This represents a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of the most likely grade that might be achieved in normal circumstances. Originally, final grades were to be calculated and generated using the Centre Assessed Grades from schools and a standardisation model. We can now confirm that any learner will receive the higher grade when considering any Centre Assessed Grade or Generated Grade for an AS, A Level, GCSE or Advanced, National or Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate grade. Additionally the policy that is in place for private candidates remains in place.

## **6. What will happen for learners in Year 10?**

Year 10 learners who were due to sit exams that would have led to a whole GCSE qualification this summer will be issued a grade following the same process as year 11 learners. Teacher assessment grades and other evidence has been used to calculate a grade.

Year 10 learners who were due to sit units only – that is units that will lead to GCSE results next summer – will not receive calculated results. For those learners, there will be two options. They can choose to sit units they plan to take in summer 2021, with their overall GCSE grade calculated on the basis of that performance only. Alternatively, they can choose to sit the year 10 units in summer 2021, along with year 11 exams. Whichever option a learner chooses, they will be awarded the best grade from either route.

## **7. How will AS levels be affected?**

This year all AS learners will receive a calculated AS grade and there will be no AS exams until summer 2021. The calculated grade has been based on a range of evidence, including centre assessment grades, and will not contribute to A level results in 2021.

In summer 2021, AS learners will have two options for their A level award. They can either choose to only sit the A2 units, with the A level grade awarded solely on their performance in those units, or they can choose to sit AS and A2 units. If they chose to sit the AS units alongside the A2 units, they will be awarded the best grade from either route – either the grade awarded from performance on the A2 units alone or the grade awarded from combining both AS and A2 units.



## **8. Why can't the AS grades I get given this summer just be used as part of my full A level next summer?**

The calculated grade issued to AS learners this summer will enable them to progress onto other pathways, as necessary. That might be other training, or employment, or to another school or college.

If a learner is carrying on to the full A level in summer 2021, the calculated grade from this summer cannot be used because it will be a grade and not a mark. Usually marks from each AS unit are aggregated in the calculation of the final A level grade.

It would not have been reasonable to ask centres to provide actual marks for learners this summer, so we had to consider other ways of awarding the A level in summer 2021.

There are **two** options:

**Option 1:** Actual performance in the A2 units in summer 2021 will be used to calculate the marks that would most likely have been achieved in the AS summer (2021). There is a clear statistical relationship between performance in different units and in normal circumstances this is the method used to award a grade if a learner has been unable to sit a unit assessment due to illness. So, it is an established method.

**Option 2:** Learners would normally have the option to take AS units alongside A2 units, and we don't want to prevent next summer's A level learners from having that option. If they do decide to take the AS and A2 units, then the UMS marks will be aggregated in the normal way. As a safeguard, if a learner chooses to take AS and A2 units together, then a comparison will be made with the grade they would have been awarded via the other route and the best grade will be awarded.

## **9. Will results still be published in August?**

Yes – AS and A level results will be published on 13 August; GCSE results will be published on 20 August.

## **10. How will learners receive their results?**

It will be up to each school to arrange for their learners to receive their results. It is not expected that there will be a results day as traditionally held. Parents should await further details from their schools.

## **11. Can I challenge the grade awarded to me, and how do I do that?**

Due to the recent changes to the awarding of grades procedures at both GCSE and A Level, the appeals process is as follows, as set out by Qualifications Wales



## Grounds for Appeal

We can confirm that the grounds for appeal, to be submitted by a school or college on behalf of a learner, are as follows:

1. The Head of Centre believes an administrative error was made in submitting the centre assessment data to WJEC.
2. The Head of Centre believes that WJEC introduced an error into the centre assessment data submitted to it.
3. The Head of Centre believes that a result issued by WJEC was incorrectly allocated and / or communicated to a learner.
4. That there was some other procedural failing on the part of WJEC.

Given the clear expectations for centres, as set out in our [Information to Centres on the submission of Centre Assessment Grades](#), Ground 1 above does not permit an appeal where the centre seeks to revise the centre assessment grade on the basis that it considers that its professional judgement was wrong.

For those learners who receive a calculated grade due to that being the highest of the grades available to them, the original grounds for appeal shall remain in place.

### Review professional judgement on which centre assessment grades were determined

We can confirm that there will not be grounds for appeal to WJEC relating to the professional judgements on which centre assessment grades were determined. This is consistent with the decision we took in June following our consultation. The grades awarded this summer will, where they are the Centre Assessment Grades, be based on holistic professional judgements made by centres using a range of information. The consultation documents were clear, as were many of the responses, that teachers were best placed, indeed uniquely placed, to make these judgements. On that basis, WJEC could not evaluate those judgements and adjudicate on decisions outside of their control. This reason remains despite the changes in approach to awarding qualifications this summer.

### Concerns of bias or discrimination

Where learners have genuine concerns that their centre has exhibited bias or discrimination of one form or another, the learner should raise the matter with their centre.

In the first instance, learners should ask their centre to check if they made an error. If the grade was submitted correctly, they may wish to make a complaint that would need to be investigated by the centre itself. Guidance on School Complaints Procedures is available from [Welsh Government](#).



In cases where that may not be appropriate, they could also pass such evidence on to WJEC who may then decide to investigate the matter as alleged malpractice by the centre. Where such a complaint is upheld following an investigation, WJEC may correct results. It is important to note that the burden of proof will lie with the complainant, and any such complaints would need to be accompanied with substantial evidence to support the case. Given the severity of such allegations, we anticipate that such cases will arise only exceptionally.

Learners may also wish to raise such concerns with the [Equality Advisory and Support Service](#) (EASS).

## **12. I'm a private candidate – how will I get my result?**

Where centres have accepted entries from private candidates, learners who may have been home-schooled, following distance-learning programmes or studying independently, they have been included in the centre's submission of data. However, there may be cases where centres will not be able to make a judgement on the achievements of a private candidate.

## **13. Will the loss of current teaching time be taken into account for learners working towards GCSEs in summer 2021?**

Qualifications Wales are working with WJEC to establish an approach to exams and awarding qualifications in 2021. The aim is to ensure that no one is disadvantaged as a result of the current situation.

## **Vocational Qualifications:**

### **14. Will all learners studying a Vocational Qualification receive a result this summer?**

The expectation is that the majority of learners who planned to take exams and assessments this summer, for progression to either further or higher education or to employment, will receive a result or be able to take an adapted assessment. However, it has not been possible for all learners to take an appropriate assessment this summer and they might have to wait for the next available assessment opportunity.

### **15. Which learners do these arrangements apply to?**

These arrangements apply to all learners who were due to take assessments towards unit or qualification results between 20 March and 31 July 2020. This includes those learners who may be only part way through their programme of study and will continue with learning towards this qualification after these dates, for example, if they had planned to take an assessment on one or more units of a modular course half-way through a 2 year programme of study.



**16. Will I receive my results for my Vocational Qualification (VTQ) the same time as GCSEs and A Levels?**

We expect results of sessional qualifications to be awarded no later than A Levels and GCSEs, that is the 13th and 20th August, respectively. This is so that no learner who is hoping to progress onto further study or higher education is disadvantaged. Many VTQ Awarding Bodies are aligning their awarding on the same day, either the 13th or 20th August to make things clearer for learners. Some VTQ's that have historically been issued in the weeks before A Levels and GCSEs, may still be issued earlier this year.

**17. Will there be future assessment opportunities available in the autumn?**

Awarding bodies that normally provide an assessment opportunity for learners between September to December will be expected to take all reasonable steps to continue to do so.

Where awarding bodies do not normally offer an autumn assessment opportunity, they should do so where there are enough learners who need to take an assessment, unless it would be impracticable or create a disproportionate burden to offer one. Awarding bodies will be able to give more specific information on their plans for assessment in the autumn.