



03/04/2020

Dear Head of Centre,

Following Wales' Education Minister's announcement to close schools and cancel the 2020 summer exam series to help fight the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), we have worked to develop a process which fairly recognises learners' work and makes sure they get their grades in time to progress. I am writing to you to set out what you will need to do in order that [GCSE, AS and A level, and Skills Challenge Certificate \(SCC\) grades](#) can be awarded this summer.

For this summer's awards, schools, colleges and other exam centres are being asked to provide centre assessment grades and rank order for their learners. These should be fair, objective and carefully considered judgements of the grades centres believe their learners would have been most likely to achieve if they had sat their exams, considering the full range of available evidence.

This is an unusual thing to ask you to do, but the unprecedented circumstances mean taking extraordinary action. We recognise that this is additional work and a process that centres aren't used to, but we need to work together collectively to ensure learners aren't disadvantaged and can be awarded grades this summer. We also recognise that the requirement to provide a rank order for learners will be challenging. What matters to all of us is that learners across Wales are treated in the fairest possible way.

We have been working closely with fellow regulators across the UK to ensure that there is consistency in the general approach this summer. The arrangements that we are putting in place are very similar to those that Ofqual have established in England. The same requirements to provide centre assessment grades and rank orders are being placed on schools, colleges and other exam centres in England.

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### **Centre assessment grades and rank order**

The deadline for submission will be no earlier than 29 May 2020, and WJEC will contact you after Easter with detailed instructions on how to submit the following:

- a centre assessment grade for every learner entered for each qualification.

This should represent the grade you believe they were most likely to have achieved if they had sat their exams.

- the rank order of learners within each grade.

For example, for all those learners with a grade of B in GCSE maths, a rank order where 1 is the most secure/highest attaining learner, and so on.

- a declaration from you, as Head of Centre, or a deputy as described in the guidance.

All three components requested will need to be provided in order for grades to be awarded.

### **External or private candidates**

You may submit centre assessment grades for any external or private learner for whom you have seen sufficient evidence of achievement to make a judgement; and include them in your rank order.

Unfortunately, we recognise this won't be possible for all external candidates. You should communicate your decision to any external candidates and take advice from WJEC where cases are not straightforward. If learners were planning to move on to further study, their prospective college or university may be willing to confirm their place without the grades at this point, given the extraordinary circumstances.

We are continuing to explore options for those learners where exam centres cannot submit a grade and who need results for progression purposes. If there are no alternative options available, learners will have the opportunity to take exams in summer 2021 (or November 2020 for GCSEs in English Language, Welsh Language, Mathematics and Mathematics-Numeracy).

### **Standardisation of grades**

To make sure that grades are fair across centres, WJEC will put all centre assessment grades through a process of standardisation using a model that is currently being developed collaboratively by us and WJEC. We expect it will look at evidence such as the expected national outcomes for this year's learners, the prior attainment of learners and the results of the centre in recent years.

If grading judgements in some centres appear to be more severe or generous than others, WJEC will adjust the grades of some or all those learners upwards or downwards accordingly.

## **Confidentiality**

As a centre, you must not, under any circumstances, share the centre assessment grades nor the rank order with learners, or their parents or carers, or any other individuals outside the centre. This is to protect the integrity of teachers' judgements, and to avoid teachers, Heads of Department, senior leaders or yourselves, as Heads of Centre being put under pressure by learners and parents, to submit a grade that is not supported by the evidence. Since the final grades for some or all learners could be different from those submitted, it also helps to manage learner expectations.

## **Appeals**

It is important we do everything we can to make sure learners are not disadvantaged by these unprecedented circumstances. However, the normal arrangements for reviews of marking and appeals will not apply. We are considering what arrangements might be put in place to allow an effective appeal, whilst keeping numbers and complexity of appeals manageable so as to avoid delay and uncertainty for learners.

## **Exams in the autumn**

Wales will not have a full autumn exam series for learners who are dissatisfied with the grades that have been calculated for them. There are many reasons for this, including the likely recurring nature of social isolation restrictions to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the disruption to learning and potential disadvantage that learners would be at this autumn, and strong feedback from those we have engaged with that the priority this autumn will be to get learning back on track for next academic year's Year 11s and 13s.

Learners in Wales who do not feel the grade they get in the summer reflects the grade they would have achieved will be able to sit the following exams in November 2020; GCSE English Language, Mathematics, Mathematics-Numeracy and Welsh Language. Exams for other qualifications will be available in summer 2021 as usual.

## **Other general, vocational and technical qualifications**

While this process applies only to GCSEs, AS and A levels, and the Skills Challenge Certificate, we are working to make sure that learners taking other vocational or technical qualifications are not disadvantaged relative to their peers in the same cohort. We will provide further guidance on these qualifications shortly.

When communicating with learners, parents and carers, you might find it helpful to signpost them to our FAQs [here](#). We have also written a letter to learners [link to learner letter] for you to circulate to reassure them that we, and WJEC, will do everything we can to make sure grades are fair.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your team of teaching professionals for your support in making this process work for your learners during what I appreciate are very challenging times.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Philip Blaker', is centered below the closing. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Philip Blaker  
Chief Executive  
Qualifications Wales